

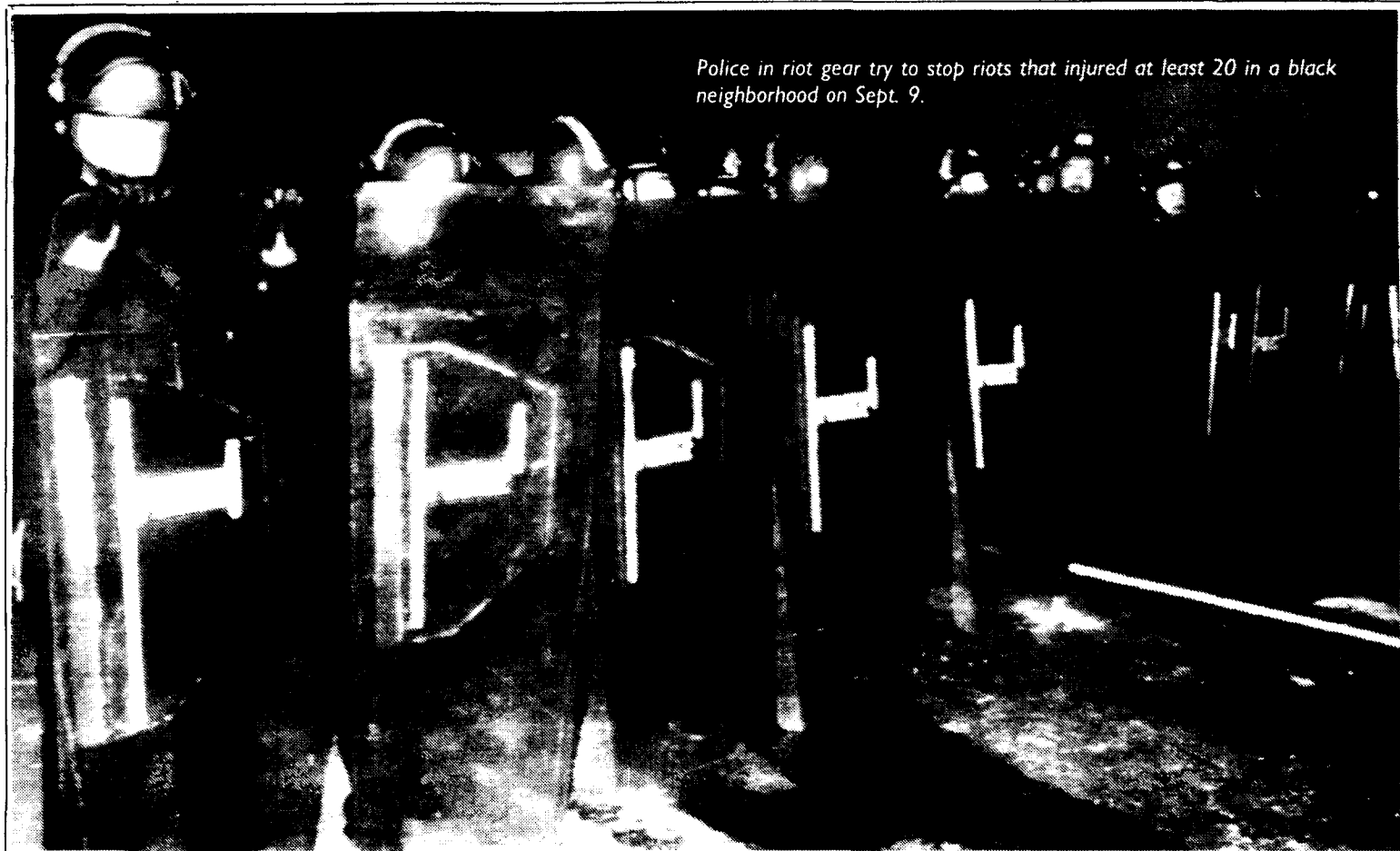
AIDS



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If present trends continue AIDS will have killed more Americans by 1988 than died in Vietnam.

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Police in riot gear try to stop riots that injured at least 20 in a black neighborhood on Sept. 9.

British riots: crimes or protests?

By Dilip Hiro

LONDON

The September 9-10 riot in Birmingham's Handsworth district came as a multiple surprise. It erupted on the morrow of the West Indian carnival, staged over the weekend, where local policemen had danced in the streets with the revellers. The riot marked a sudden break in the lassitude in which the unemployed, alienated youths of Britain's inner cities had fallen after a series of riots four years ago, and it occurred in an area that had pioneered "community patrolling," whereby police abandon their patrol cars and take to foot patrolling. The timing of the riot, it is widely believed, has hurt Birmingham's chances of being selected as the venue for the 1992 Olympics.

An orgy of arson and looting by several hundred largely black youths reduced more than 50 shops and houses in Handsworth to rubble and caused the deaths of two men. As in the past, the riot was triggered off by a minor row between a black driver and the police over a parking offense. But the recent incident occurred against the background of rising police action against the sale of marijuana and hashish in the area, something to which they had until recently turned a blind eye.

To get at the root causes of the recent violence one could usefully turn to President Lyndon Johnson's speech to Americans after a series of riots in 1967. "The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack—mounted at every level—upon the conditions that breed despair and violence," he said. "All of us know what those conditions are: ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs."

Not enough jobs. The unemployment rate in Handsworth is 30 percent, nearly two-and-a-half times the national average. Significantly, a survey conducted in 1982 by the government's Home Office concluded: "As long as unemployment remains high in Handsworth, the danger of riots will remain."

When it comes to 16- to 19-year-olds, Birmingham's inner areas—of which Handsworth is one—have the highest jobless rate in the country, and the fastest increase in unemployment between the censuses of 1971-81. This summer only 9 percent of all school graduates of Birmingham will find a job. For black and brown school graduates who comprise one-fifth of the total, the figure is 4 percent. These statistics are for all of Birmingham. For Handsworth, the chances of employment are less than half. Instead of not enough jobs, the situation is: no jobs at all.

Root causes

This bleak picture represents only part of the damage done to the manufacturing industry in the Midlands region—of which Birmingham is the capital—by the Thatcher administration. Since it assumed power in 1979, one-third of all manufacturing jobs in the Midlands have disappeared. Factory closures and job losses are the daily litany of this once-booming region of Britain.

Handsworth is a decrepit, run-down, poverty-stricken slum. Of the 5,200 households there, 60 percent live in inferior-quality municipal housing. Only 25 percent of Handsworthians are owner-occupiers, whereas the national figure is 56 percent. And severe cuts in public spending ordered by the national government in recent years have made a bad situation worse. This year the housing investment in Handsworth is expected to fall to one-third the level in real terms of 1979. Three out of five Handsworthians are black or brown.

Racial prejudice and discrimination are rampant. A recent survey by the Home Office revealed that 90 percent of the white respondents believed that there was racial prejudice against blacks. Nothing hurts black dignity more than the behavior of the police, which is almost exclusively white. A national poll showed that 41 percent of blacks considered the police "bad or very bad," whereas only 16 percent of the whites did. As many as 76 percent of the blacks had been "annoyed" by the police, but only 16 percents of the whites had such an experience.

What made matters worse was police behavior toward the nation's

striking miners during their year-long dispute. It demonstrated to many citizens that the police were more a riot-control organization mounting military-style operations rather than a force providing community policing to local rate-payers.

Following the 1981 riots the government appointed Lord Scarman to study the causes and release recommendations. Those included that police constables be put back on the beat on foot and that continuous consultations be held between the police and the community about strategy and tactics. This was called "community policing." By now all but six of the 43 police forces in the country offer some sort of community policing.

Handsworth, however, had instituted community policing long before Lord Scarman recommended it, so the riots there were all the more surprising. Therefore, the only lesson that can be drawn is this: community policing cannot be a substitute for the socio-economic policies needed to relieve the mounting frustrations of the inner cities.

Community policing is fraught with problems and tensions. In the general framework of maintaining law and order, it rests uneasily with the specialist squads—fraud, crime investigation, drugs—into which the force is divided. The status lies with the "go-out-and-get-them cops," not with the "namby pamby" community policemen.

These tensions within the police force became unbearable when a few months earlier Thatcher launched a frontal attack on the drug pushers, threatening that their lives are not "worth living." This meant

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that the police in such areas as Handsworth—where in the past they had overlooked the sale of marijuana and hashish—decided to get tough. In their enthusiasm they made little distinction between a crackdown on "merchants of powdered death" and the youths who hang around a pub to smoke a joint.

In addition to the small number of Rastafarians in Handsworth who openly admit that they smoke hashish as part of their sacrament, many West Indians deal in soft drugs. What makes them do so and how they feel about the recent increase in police raids and surveillance was well articulated by a self-confessed drug dealer.

"Us guys, we just sell weed, nothing heroin," he said. "Most guys here are on armed robbery or something, but all we're doing is weed. Most of us have three, four, five kids. We got no jobs. All we can do is sell the weed. If we can't hustle, there's nothing for us and there's nothing for the kids. If we can't sell our weed then we is going to do armed robbery. If they don't leave us alone we're going to burn them down."

So back to square one—the lack of jobs. The government knows this, or ought to. Yet in the aftermath of the civil disorder all that the home minister and prime minister could offer was that they were treating the riot as a series of crimes. They ordered an inquiry of sorts: a report by the Birmingham police, which appears inadequate compared to the actions taken in the wake of the 1981 riots.

The government seems to be stealthily fostering in the public mind the notion that riots such as these will keep erupting and that Britons better learn to live with them in the same way that Northern Ireland citizens do. In other words, the policy of "benign neglect" toward the unemployed and the alienated will continue.

Dilip Hiro's most recent book is *Iran under the Ayatollahs*.



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IN THESE TIMES

By Steve Martz

NEW YORK

THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO the AIDS epidemic has been inadequate, and leaders—from President Reagan on down—will have to do much more if our society is to respond effectively and compassionately to the manifold challenges posed by the AIDS crisis. This is the lesson Americans have learned from the latest round of public panic over the illness and from four years of coping with the epidemic. And it was the near-unanimous verdict of 23 researchers, health care and social service providers, government officials and other experts who testified before a congressional subcommittee here September 13.

They told the subcommittee on intergovernmental relations and human resources, chaired by Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY), that the response of the federal government in providing research funds consistently has been one of too little, too late. Despite the sluggish pace of funding, most witnesses agreed that scientific progress in investigating the once-mysterious illness has been rapid. But researchers and others warned medical investigation has reached a "critical point" where continued progress toward effective treatment and a possible cure requires dramatically stepped-up funding.

The nearly two-dozen witnesses also told the Weiss subcommittee, at its fourth hearing on the issue in two years, that government planners at the federal, state and local levels repeatedly have failed—and still are failing—to grasp the full dimensions of the AIDS epidemic on society. They said continuing failure jeopardizes lives that might otherwise be spared. As an example, several cited the failure of government at all levels to provide money to educate groups at risk for AIDS—particularly male homosexuals—even though statistics have indicated the effectiveness of education in changing sexual behaviors that play a key role in transmission of AIDS.

The response of local governments has been uneven, the subcommittee heard, with the most comprehensive, humane and cost-effective approach developed by San Francisco, which has the highest per capita incidence of AIDS among major cities. The panel also was told that many states and municipalities with a low incidence of AIDS have done little or nothing to address the crisis, and that such inaction would cost lives later.

Although much of the testimony at the day-long hearing was an implicit indictment of the Reagan administration's fiscal, health and federalism policies, the most urgent words of the day were reserved for the president himself. They were first spoken by the two witnesses touched most personally by the illness—a gay man with AIDS and a mother whose son died of it.

Noting the recent surge of publicity—and fear—about AIDS and the fact that the president has made no public statement about it, New Yorkers Victor Bender and Sara Mercado urged Reagan to intervene personally to calm illegitimate fears and to improve his administration's response to the epidemic. (At a press conference on September 17 the president responded to three questions about AIDS. "He certainly didn't show any compassion for people who have AIDS," said Jeff Levi, governmental and political affairs director of the National Gay Task Force [NGTF]. "The only compassion he expressed was for parents.")

"I beg my president to be moved," said Bender, his voice trembling slightly. "I beg my president to act. I beg my president to be calm.... Where is Mr. Reagan?"

Mercado, whose son William died in June 1984, also asked Reagan to take immediate action.

"The government is the only one that can allay the fear that is spreading in the U.S. about AIDS," she said. Mercado questioned the president's reputation as a compassionate man. "Mr. Reagan...must have a heart of stone not to have told Congress to

increase the money for [AIDS] research."

The picture Bender and Mercado painted of the physical and emotional suffering of people with AIDS would have broken most hearts of stone. Bender, whose fight against AIDS was featured on the cover of an issue of *New York* magazine last month, said he has been hospitalized twice for a total of 26 days and currently has Kaposi's sarcoma, the rare skin cancer associated with AIDS. More difficult than his physical suffering, he said, was the emotional pain that came when he was too weak to work any longer and had to give up his job as a New York tour boat guide for Circle Line Tours.

system.

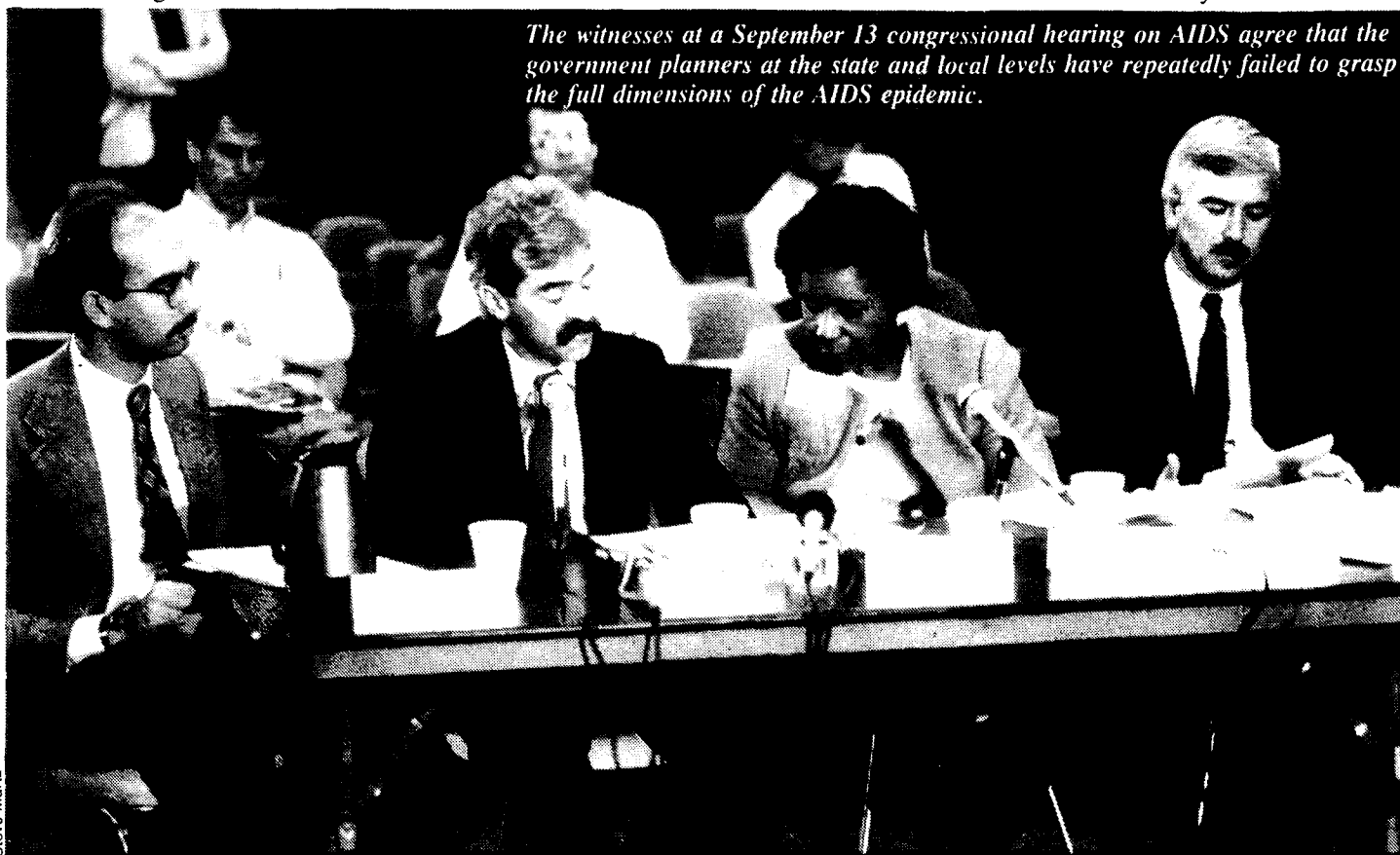
In the most dramatic incident of AIDS panic, parental fear and anger over the decision of a school district in Queens to allow an elementary school-age child to attend regular classes led to a boycott of schools the week of the hearing. At its zenith, an estimated 18,000 children were kept home from school, despite assurances of public health officials that there was no danger.

Some of the panic undoubtedly was fueled by the current wave of "pack journalism" coverage of AIDS, the second time in two years—the first occurred in the summer of 1983—that the mass media has fixed

the National Gay Task Force (NGTF).

"When children are involved, emotions run highest.... We have been unsuccessful in turning the message around: the general public is not placed at risk through exposure to someone with AIDS. Who is at risk is the person with AIDS who has casual contact with the general public because he or she cannot fight off as easily the germs that we are never harmed by."

Dr. Mathilde Krim, chair of the AIDS Medical Foundation, said the failure to educate the public extended into the medical community. As evidence, she cited the case of a doctor who recently testified at a court



The witnesses at a September 13 congressional hearing on AIDS agree that the government planners at the state and local levels have repeatedly failed to grasp the full dimensions of the AIDS epidemic.

More funding needed in rising AIDS crisis

"I loved that job more than any other job I ever had," he said. "My ambition in life was to be a world-famous tour guide."

Now, Bender said, his employer feels it necessary to keep him at a distance. The day before the hearing, Bender was pressured not to attend an office cruise because his presence would upset and frighten other employees. Although he honored his employer's request, Bender said, "it broke my heart."

Mercado told in her testimony of hospital nurses too busy or fearful to give her son proper attention and care during his hospitalization and of a Medicaid worker who, from fear, refused to come to her house to process her son's application for assistance. She also detailed her son's suffering.

"He was so frail, so fragile, toward the end that we were afraid to touch him for fear his skin might break," she told the subcommittee. Although William Mercado was 36 at his death, his mother said he had lost so much weight and strength that "he looked like a 17-year-old angel when he died."

The issues raised at the September 18 hearing were familiar ones to the Weiss panel, an oversight subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations. At three earlier hearings, two in Washington and another in San Francisco, members heard similar testimony.

What made this hearing somewhat different than earlier ones was the growing public concern about casual transmission of AIDS and the growing death toll. That public concern—verging on panic in some quarters—formed an unmistakable backdrop to the hearing, as school districts around the country that week scurried to come up with policies for handling students or faculty with AIDS. Some school districts, such as that in Fairfax, Va., a suburb of Washington, D.C., did so even though they had no known AIDS cases in their

on AIDS. It began this time with news in July of Rock Hudson's AIDS diagnosis and shows no sign of abating.

During the week of the Weiss hearing, the New York media were filled with AIDS pieces, from sober articles in the *New York Times* to the screaming headlines of the *New York Post*. A particularly bizarre headline appeared on the cover of the September 12 *Post*: "Teen Gets AIDS/man's heart."

Other media were close behind. *The Today Show* ran a five-part AIDS series that week, and the Sunday before the hearing the *Washington Post* gave prominent play to an article by a neurologist who suggested there was a conflict between the right of society to protect itself from an epidemic and the civil rights of those with AIDS or at risk for contracting it. And the conflict, he said, must be resolved in favor of society.

Whatever the tone, it was clear that in 1985, unlike 1983, the media interest was in step with, not ahead of, public interest in AIDS. With more than 13,000 reported cases—against fewer than 2,000 the summer of 1983—that should be no surprise. A lot more people have been touched by the disease in the past two years.

It was that fact as well as the uncertainty over where the panic and high profile media coverage might lead that lent an extra edge to much of the testimony, as leaders of groups involved in the struggle against AIDS conceded they are losing in their effort to educate the general public about the disease.

"It is a demonstration of a lack of faith in our public health community or our inability to communicate effectively health messages that so many people still fear casual contact with those who have AIDS or might have been exposed to it," said Jeff Levi, government and political affairs director of

hearing that there was reason to be concerned about children without AIDS attending class with a child who has the disease. Krim, who has extensive AIDS experience, said no doctor truly familiar with its transmission would have made such a statement.

In a sad, ironic vignette at the hearing's conclusion, officials of the General Services Administration (GSA) demonstrated that the government needs as much education as the general public. The GSA, which is responsible for maintaining the Federal Office Building where the hearing was held, sent a cleaning crew in to disinfect the hearing room because a person with AIDS had been in it.

All indications are that the public education issue—indeed, all AIDS issues—will become more critical in the next several years. The number of AIDS cases is presently doubling every 10 months, and one federal agency has predicted that there will be 40,000 cases in the U.S. by the end of 1986. Several witnesses noted that if present trends continue the disease will have killed more Americans by the next presidential election than died in the Vietnam war.

Overview of the crisis

AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, is believed to be caused by a virus alternately named the human t-lymphotropic virus-III (HTLV-III) or lymphadenopathy associated virus (LAV). The virus attacks the immune system of the human body, destroying cells vital to the body's natural defenses against infection and leaving its victims vulnerable to a host of opportunistic infections. The disease first was identified in this country in 1981, although doctors say that, with an incubation period that can be as long as five or more years, it could have begun being transmitted in this country in the mid-'70s. AIDS' mortality rate approaches 100 percent several years after initial diagnosis, although some doctors are optimistic that this figure can be changed. About 75 percent of cases have been among gay or bisexual men.

The September 13 hearing, although similar in substance to earlier Weiss subcommittee hearings, nevertheless provided

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By Salim Muwakkil

WHEN THE CENSUS BUREAU released in August figures showing a drop in the country's poverty rate, from 15.3 percent in 1983 to 14.4 percent a year later, President Reagan boasted it was "further evidence of the miraculous powers of American enterprise," and various pundits cited the decline as a vindication of Reaganomics. Placed in context, however, the figures and the accompanying hype merely evidenced the miraculous power of his administration to transform indicting information into comforting homilies.

While the census data does represent some decrease in the number of those in poverty (from 35.5 million to 33.7 million), the 14.4 percent figure is still the highest since 1966, except for the recession years of 1982 and 1983. What's more, this high rate of poverty was registered during a year when the economy experienced a real growth of nearly 6 percent and the official unemployment rate declined by more than 2 percent. Because of these economic conditions, most analysts anticipated a much larger reduction in poverty levels.

"Every expert predicted the 1984 decline in poverty," says Michael Harrington, co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and author of *The New American Poverty*. "But the administration's jubilation on the rate reduction ignores the fact that the 33.7 million people who are poor in 1984 is higher than the number of poor in 1964, when President Johnson declared his war on poverty."

In boosting this economy's "miraculous power," Reagan fails to mention that the poverty figures are much higher than estimates made by those in his own administration. Last year Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige predicted the poverty rate would fall to 13 percent in 1984. And some of the more ideological supporters of Reaganomics, those supply-side mystics, foretold of even lesser numbers.

"The real problem with these figures is that they indicate poverty may be becoming more intractable," says John Bickerman, research director at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), a Washington-based research organization. "In 1976 and 1977, before the steady rise in poverty began in 1979, and at a time when the unemployment rate was comparable to 1984 levels, the poverty rate stood at 11.6 to 11.8 percent. Now, although unemployment has dropped to those late '70s levels, the poverty rate is nearly three points higher. This means there are more than six million additional Americans below the poverty line." And, Bickerman notes, because of stagnation in the economy, continued declines in the poverty rate are not likely in the near future.

Higher plateaus

"Changes in the rate of poverty are closely tied to changes in the unemployment rate and to real wages," Bickerman explains. "When unemployment drops and earnings rise, the poverty rate almost always declines. But the unemployment rate has been hovering at about 7.3 percent for most of 1985, and it shows no sign of dropping."

"Even more disturbing," he adds, "real wages have stopped rising and have started falling. Real weekly earnings in July 1985 were about 2 percent below what they were in July 1984. This indicates that the decline in the rate of poverty has stopped. It may also mean we've hit a new plateau in both the poverty and unemployment rates."

Indeed, this phenomena of rising economic plateaus, and the millions of people who are left behind on lower levels, is seldom addressed in current public discourse on the economy. Thus, figures that reveal unemployment has leveled off at 7.3 percent can inspire sighs of relief from mainstream economists and chest-thumping celebration from Reaganites without any consideration of the context. The drop in the rate from a recession high of nearly 11 percent in 1982 to 7.3 percent in October 1984 was converted by Reagan supporters into valuable political capital.



Andrew Popper

ECONOMY

Drop in poverty rate hides rising injustices

"In the 1984 election campaign, this trend was cited as a measure of the administration's economic success," wrote Harrington in a recent Op Ed piece in the *New York Times*, "and one was constantly reminded of the millions of jobs generated by the recovery. Few remembered that John F. Kennedy targeted a 3 percent unemployment rate, or that the Republican Party was savaged by the electorate in the congressional elections of 1970 because joblessness had soared to 4.8 percent."

The pauperization process

Most analysts blame the drop in real wages on the decline of manufacturing jobs and the growth of jobs in the service sector. Says David Dembo of the Council of International and Public Affairs, "The hourly wage in retail trade is only 62.9 percent of the hourly wage in manufacturing. Similarly, hourly wages in the finance, insurance and real-estate sector, and in other service sector employment averages 83.3 percent and 83.1 percent respectively of those in the manufacturing sector." Those jobs are not just lower paying, he notes, but are often part-time as well.

"Unfortunately," Dembo adds, "most of the new employment in the last couple of years has been in the lowest-paying sectors. In fact, the wholesale and transportation sectors have shown a net decline of 862,000 jobs since 1983, while retail and other services have experienced the most gains—four million jobs—in the same period." In a recent study Dembo and co-author Ward Morehouse refer to these new patterns of employment as the process of "pauperization."

Black Americans, because of their heavy concentration in the automobile, rubber, steel and other declining smokestack industry jobs, are particularly vulnerable to these economic shifts. While the overall poverty rate was 14.4 percent in 1984; for blacks it was 33.8 percent. Poverty among black children reached 51 percent—the highest rate ever recorded. Of the black children living in poverty-stricken families, 70 percent of those families were headed by

women.

According to a National Urban League (NUL) report, black female-headed families are poorer than families below the poverty level headed by black men, white women or white men. Black women received only 52 percent of what they would have received if income were divided equally by all adult members of society. In 1981, according to the NUL report, black women had a real median income of \$1,917.

As a consequence of their increased pauperization, black children are facing severe hardships. "For the first time in over a decade, the black infant death rate increased in 1983," notes Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, a lobby group concerned with promoting the welfare of this country's youth.

According to Rep. Leon Panetta (D-CA), chair of the House Agriculture Committee's nutrition subcommittee, indications of increasing hunger are becoming more apparent and difficult to ignore. "What was discounted a few years ago as shallow and anecdotal evidence about the growth of hunger and poverty is now turning up as cold, hard statistics." Panetta warns the situation is critical, and he urges governmental action.

"Over the past 28 months, I have been involved in 16 hearings on the hunger

The gap between the poor and the rich is the widest it's been since the census started collecting data in '47.

A man on line at a soup kitchen in Harlem. Hunger is a real and growing problem.

issue," the congressman explains. "I've visited dozens of soup kitchens and talked with many people involved with the problem. Their message has been so uniform that I have no doubt that it is true: the hunger problem is real and growing." And, Panetta adds, although the increase in hunger has been confirmed by countless studies and surveys, the federal government's response has been inadequate.

The rich-poor gap

The Reagan administration's ideological reading of statistics conceals an especially grievous inequity: the gap between the rich and the poor is wider than ever before recorded. "The poorest 40 percent of U.S. families received just 15.7 percent of the national income in 1984," notes Bickerman. "This is the lowest percentage the Census Bureau has ever recorded. The middle 20 percent received 17 percent, which is also the lowest ever. Meanwhile, the top 40 percent received 67.3 percent of the national income, the highest percentage ever recorded."

And, not only has poverty grown in recent years, but those who are poor have grown poorer. According to the CBPP's analysis of the census data, the percentage of families with incomes below \$5,000 a year has grown faster than the poverty rate in general. Five percent of all U.S. families had incomes below \$5,000 in 1984, and this represented a 43 percent increase since 1976 and 1977 in the proportion of families below \$5,000. During this same period, the proportion of black families with incomes below \$5,000 a year rose by more than 50 percent.

"This, in my opinion, is a national outrage," says Bickerman. "The disparity is aggravated by a tax system that penalizes the poor and rewards the rich with tax shelters. The poor are suffering with very little chance of receiving government assistance, since the Reagan deficits have made any discussion of new government programs out of the question. It's unique in American politics to have an administration's opponents actually doing the administration's work for it. In one sense the Reagan deficits are an insurance policy to insure Democrats won't reverse Reaganomic policies any time soon."

"I don't think it's all gloom and doom, though," Bickerman adds. "With the right kind of leadership, the kind that taps Americans' best instincts, we can redirect our economic priorities and move the country toward a more just society."

AIDS

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a fairly comprehensive overview of the AIDS crisis in at least three different areas: federal research funding, federal planning and non-research response, local efforts and planning, and the medical situation and progress.

Weiss and others criticized what they said was the Reagan administration's tendency to "rob Peter to pay Paul"—that is, to shift public health funds from other areas into AIDS research instead of programming new money. Administration spokespersons have in the past contended that such shifts were responsible, and said they were willing to spend whatever funds were medically necessary on AIDS.

Several witnesses criticize the administration's AIDS funding proposals for consistently being inadequate and said only congressional pressure had managed to provide current funding levels. "Each year," said NGTF's Levi, "the administration has submitted a budget proposal for the forthcoming fiscal year that was considerably lower than the money spent in the current fiscal year, saying this was all the Public Health Service scientists had requested—only to be embarrassed into having to amend that request once it was learned that PHS scientists had in fact requested a larger amount."

Funding issues now are more critical than ever, the committee heard, because the virus believed to cause AIDS has been identified, and extensive—and expensive—clinical trials are necessary to find the drug or drugs that can be used successfully against it. Whether those trials are conducted primarily by federal researchers or by those who work for private drug companies, significant federal funding of research efforts will be necessary.

Although the pace of AIDS research has been strong to date and much progress has been made, research is at a critical juncture,

said Dr. James Rahal, chief of infectious diseases at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Manhattan. The combination of scientific skill and good luck that has propelled research so far cannot carry it much further.

"The funding that has allowed us to get to this point is probably 10 percent or less of what will be required from here on in," he said, in an unusually blunt assessment from a doctor employed by the federal government.

Other federal issues

The following non-funding issues at the federal level were highlighted in addition to the need for educating both the general public and those groups at higher risk for AIDS:

- Chief among these was the need for some kind of federal-level task force to coordinate the government's AIDS efforts. This step was strongly urged by many witnesses at the Weiss panel's first AIDS hearing in August 1983, but no action has been taken. That failure has resulted, according to NGTF's Levi, in ineffective coordination of AIDS efforts, scientists being constrained by "budgetary politics," and "appalling confusion" among doctors and researchers about current clinical trials.

- An effective way for dealing with health care costs relating to AIDS needs to be developed. An official of New York City's Health and Hospital Corporation said a preliminary estimate by his organization placed the average daily cost of caring for an AIDS patient at \$726, almost twice the cost of caring for the typical medical/surgical patient. With the Centers for Disease Control estimating that the total health care cost of the average person with AIDS approaches \$140,000, the official said the federal government will have to expand its role by increasing and adapting Medicare and other benefits to meet the special needs of people with AIDS.

- Other witnesses urged the Food and Drug Administration to relax its guidelines and allow more experimental drugs to be

used in this country so that people with AIDS who wish to try them will not have to travel abroad to seek treatment with them, as many have recently traveled to France to receive HPA-23. Carol Donovan, a nurse with the supportive care program of St. Vincent's Hospital in New York, said her staff knew of "a number of situations where desperate AIDS victims" even had convinced friends or relatives to smuggle drugs into the country for them.

- The committee was told that state and local governments must do more, particularly in the area of discrimination. "There is rampant discrimination against people with AIDS," said Katy Taylor, a human rights specialist with the New York City Commission on Human Rights. Moreover, said Levi of the Task Force, socially sanctioned discrimination against gays is impeding efforts to fight AIDS. "How does a public health official support education of gay men about safer sex," he asked, "in a state that still has sodomy laws on the books, with law enforcement officials still willing to enforce them?"

- There is a major problem in the insurance industry that needs to be addressed, as the industry seeks to screen out persons at high risk for AIDS. Taylor, Levi and Chris Collins of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund all cited examples of insurance discrimination and say such instances are increasing. The issue may ultimately turn on whether companies legally can use the HTLV-III antibody test—which tests only whether a person has been exposed to the AIDS virus, not whether he or she will develop AIDS—to screen out high risk individuals. A New York State insurance regulator told the committee that the state would never allow the test to be used for that purpose. But the issue remains a murky one in many locales, and the potential for financial and emotional cost is high for those who may be refused health or life insurance and later develop AIDS.

- The demand for housing for people with AIDS is increasing and must be met by local and other funds. Rev. Lee Hancock

of New York AIDS Research Center told the subcommittee that most of her organization's \$135,000 annual budget has come from donations by private individuals and religious groups, but said the scope of the challenge now confronting the organization mandates an immediate change. "We need direct and speedy access to government monies, access unfettered by bureaucratic red tape," she said.

In the end, two points emerged most clearly from the hearing: the need for more federal and local funds to be pumped into meeting the challenges posed by AIDS and the need for education. The education must be aimed at the general public in order to combat panic, but, more important, it must be targeted at groups at risk for contracting the illness, in order to reduce the rate of transmission of AIDS.

The government's track record at timely response is not good, and it is that record—not casual contact with people with AIDS—that may pose the greatest danger of transmission in the heterosexual community.

"Already, there is concrete evidence that AIDS virus infection has spread into heterosexual STD [sexually-transmitted disease] populations," Daniel William, a Manhattan internist and president of New York Physicians for Human Rights. "In November 1984, the prevalence of exposure to AIDS as measured by the HTLV-III/LAV antibodies in non-homosexual, non-IV drug using men attending a New York City STD clinic was 3.4 percent, i.e., 10 times the prevalence in volunteer blood donors."

William said that the experience of the gay community shows that awareness of risk leads to a reduction in sexual behavior that can facilitate AIDS transmission. He called for immediate education about AIDS risk aimed at all sexually active populations.

Steve Martz is a theology student in Chicago and a volunteer in that city's AIDS Action Project. He began covering AIDS in 1981 while editor of the *Washington Blade*.

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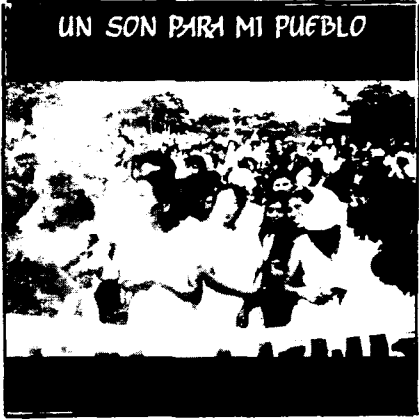
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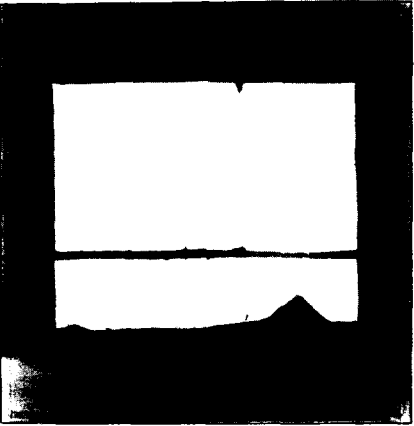
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Peter Hannan

By William Gasperini

ESTELI

ON SEPT. 14, 1856, A YOUNG MAN named Andres Castro threw a rock during a battle as North American soldiers attacked an isolated Nicaraguan farm. The Americans were fighting with William Walker, a "filibusterer" who invaded Central America with a mercenary group hoping to make Nicaragua a Confederate state.

Castro's move contributed to Walker's defeat in the battle, and his action has the same significance for Nicaraguans that John Paul Jones' famous statement "I have not yet begun to fight" holds for North Americans. Both symbolize individual effort against a powerful but not invincible enemy.

The fact that a group of Nicaraguans had invited Walker and his band into Nicaragua to help in a civil war occurring at the time is often recalled by current leaders, when comparing 1856 with today.

In a speech in mid-September commemorating the battle, President Daniel Ortega said, "In that period a bad group of Nicaraguans brought the *yanqui* invaders in, and it cost so much to expell them. Today there are those wishing to repeat history, leading us down the same road with no benefit for our people."

Each year Walker's defeat is marked back to back with the September 15 independence celebrations, the date all five Central American nations left Spanish rule in 1821. Known as the *fiestas patrias*, Central Americans celebrate Independence by running a "liberty torch" from Guatemala to Costa Rica, arriving in the latter nation each September 15. But the torch never made it all the way this year; Costa Rica refused to receive it from the Nicaraguans, marking the first time the independence symbol did not complete its journey.

Several days earlier Nicaraguan Education Minister Fernando Cardenal had accepted the torch from Honduras in an emotional ceremony on the countries' mutual border. Embraced by Honduran students and greeted by his Honduran counterpart and military officials, Cardenal told his neighbors Walker had said, "I want all five nations or none at all," and that only through united action was the invader driven out. (Nicaragua and Costa Rica joined in one famous battle in the Walker era, and he finally met his end in Honduras in 1860.)

NICARAGUA

Independence day marked by growing tensions with neighbors

The following day Cardenal's plea for unity was shattered in a major border incident not far from where he received the torch. According to reports, a group of 800 anti-Sandinista *contras* massed across the border from their well-known "Las Vegas" camp.

Nicaragua charged that the Honduran air force had supported the action by sending American-made F-86 fighter planes across the border after Sandinista forces repelled the attack. The Nicaraguans reported one helicopter was hit by Honduran fire but did not fall.

Some press accounts maintained Honduras admitted its forces cross into Nicaragua, but the Honduran press later focused attention on the "grave threat from Nicaragua" that the incident represented. The same day a border post on the Nicaragua-Costa Rican border suffered a *contra* attack.

Costa Rica refused the "liberty torch" from Nicaragua. For the first time, the independence symbol didn't complete its journey.

In an independence address Costa Rican President Luis Alberto Mongé said his people were "pacifists but not cowards." He then went a step further, turning the tables on Nicaragua. "We have taken measures for defense against the agents of oppression, the enemies of democracy, the false pacifists, those who see our way of life as salt in the bloody wounds of their

crimes," he said.

"The enemy is the same."

The timing of the border incidents was not lost on Nicaraguan President Ortega, who blamed the U.S. for inflaming tensions in the region to create conditions for a direct intervention. "On the 164th anniversary of our independence, and the 129th of the first *yanqui* defeat in Central America, the enemy is the same," Ortega said. "These actions do not represent the wishes of our neighbors, but are imposed by the U.S. administration that wants to end all efforts to achieve peace. They are tightening the political fence around us."

In front of thousands of students gathered for a civic ceremony commemorating the 14th, Ortega called for direct dialog with Honduran President Suazo Cordova and a joint border patrol. But Suazo later rejected the call, saying a summit meeting would serve no purpose and that he would go to Contadora, the Organization of American States or the United Nations, should it become necessary.

In fact, a Contadora meeting in Panama was the only bright spot for the region during the week. The five Central American foreign ministers ended a "positive" meeting with the ministers of the Contadora group (Mexico, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia). The ministers agreed to most points of a new peace agreement, leaving open the sticky questions of monitoring the accords, limits on size of military forces and maneuvers in the region. A new phase of discussions will begin in October, with the signing of the agreement scheduled for November "if consensus can be reached," according to Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto.

Just before the Contadora discussion, U.S. ambassadors and personnel from the region also met in Panama, headed by Secretary for Latin American affairs Elliot Abrams. The ambassadors reportedly dis-

cussed the state of affairs in Central America, just days after Washington issued a statement that "no peace accord would be preferable to a bad one." Ironically, an adviser named William Walker was one of those present at the meeting.

World Court case

In distant Holland, meanwhile, Nicaragua's case against the U.S. in the World Court at the Hague continued with testimony from Sandinista commander Luis Carrión. Carrión testified about the history of the U.S.-backed *contra* war,

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By David Corn

THIS SUMMER THE THREE MOST popular men in the United States were, in no particular order of importance, Ronald Reagan, Sylvester Stallone-cum-Rambo and Bruce Springsteen. The three shared much in common. Each possessed some anatomical part that drew much comment. We had the president's cancerous colon, Stallone's continent-sized chest and the Boss' butt, which stuck out of his chart-topping *Born in the U.S.A.* album.

Each also had the flag. As Reagan vanquished the Big C, the country rallied round him, his job approval rating soared to a record-setting 65 percent and talk continued of a "new patriotism." While hostage-taking terrorists in the Middle East once again provoked feelings of American impotence, Stallone/Rambo single-handedly avenged the Vietnam war for the Gipper and us all. And Springsteen was greeted by a sea of stars and stripes at each stop of his global concert tour. All this Springsteen-inspired flag-waving had previously been cited by some—including two true rock and rollers, Ronald Reagan and George Will—as evidence of a resurgence of America's-back-again patriotism.

A grim portrait of America

It takes no great wisdom, though, to see which of the three doesn't really fit in this group. Even the most casual listening of *Born in the U.S.A.* reveals a grim portrait of an American promise gone terribly sour. This theme is woven throughout the album and has been evident in Springsteen's work since the 1975 *Born to Run*. Even George Will should be able to pick it out. After all, it wasn't beyond Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary* and point man for the neoconservatives.

In a recent column in the *New York Post*, Podhoretz reveals a startling and hideous secret: "the world evoked by Bruce Springsteen...has much more in common with the vision of America painted by [New York Gov.] Mario Cuomo in his speech to the Democratic National Convention last year than with anything Ronald Reagan generally has to say." Shocking.

Nevertheless, rock critic Podhoretz, who announces his discovery with barely-concealed glee, finds it curious that the young, who have confided their great affection for Reagan to numerous pollsters, have feverishly embraced Springsteen, whose "message is addressed not to believers in any Reaganite values but to people who are praying for a resurgence of the radical activism of the '60s."

Podhoretz perceptively notes the contradiction. He is wrong, however, to confine it only to the young. At a recent Springsteen concert the audience contained plenty of fans in their 30s and 40s. The question remains: How can an America in love with Ronald Reagan crown Bruce Springsteen—the Mario Cuomo of pop music—king of rock and roll? Actually, America's love affairs with Springsteen and Reagan may not be as contradictory as they appear. The two do share some common traits. And Springsteen's rise to rock's highest pantheon may even hold a lesson or two for the left.

Leaving politics aside for a moment, the reasons for the explosive surge in Springsteen's popularity here and abroad are several. First off, the man undeniably has talent: his songs are deftly written, his albums are well crafted and rich in texture. And then there's the show. No other rock performer is able to project more integrity and sincerity. That he cares for the music and his audience is obvious. He is the Great Communicator of rock and roll. At the same time, he unleashes a transcendent energy and never loses touch with the basic, ebullient spirit of rock and roll. He is powerfully serious when he slowly sings "This Land Is Your Land," he romps when he belts out "Twist and Shout."

Right album at the right time

But Springsteen's gifts as a songwriter and performer have been in evidence for years prior to the release of *Born in the U.S.A.*

and his 1984-85 tour, which is in its last weeks. While he had been popular, he had not reached the exalted position of megastar. What happened? Simply, *Born in the U.S.A.* was the right album at the right time and capitalized on a recent phenomenon that finds the entertainment industry and media promoting a single star at a time. The king of the hill—whoever it is at the moment—reigns supreme, inhabiting the highest firmament. We move from one mania to the next. There was Michael Jackson-mania, Prince-mania and Madonna-mania. Then came Springsteen.

But he is no ordinary rock star. After a parade of cartoonish pop icons—Jackson, Prince and Madonna—here is a seemingly real person, no white glove, purple dress or other get-up. Being white, male and unabashedly heterosexual does him no harm. Perhaps America has had enough of the sexual ambiguity of Jackson and Prince. Springsteen's good looks and bulging biceps also help record sales.

Springsteen is the first major rock figure in recent memory whose image is that of a regular guy, one who happened to hit gold (or, perhaps, platinum). What's more, all evidence is that the image is the reality, which makes it easier to identify with Springsteen. After all, who really wants to spend his days dressed in sequins and talk-

ing to animals.

In appearance, sentiment and song, Springsteen commemorates the trials and tribulations of working-class America. This, too, helps explain the spell he has cast. Michael Jackson *et al* may produce music you want to dance to at a party, but their songs generally have little to do with the lives of their audiences. To millions of fans, Springsteen, with his working-class roots, sings to, of and for them. He speaks the same language. He uses familiar symbols. Though his focus is often on the dark side, his songs touch upon the day-to-day concerns of middle America. His songs are haunted by the presence of those out of work, the Vietnam veteran who was given no choice but to fight in the war and then discarded by society, the young family forced by chronic unemployment to turn its back on its hometown and head south in search of work.

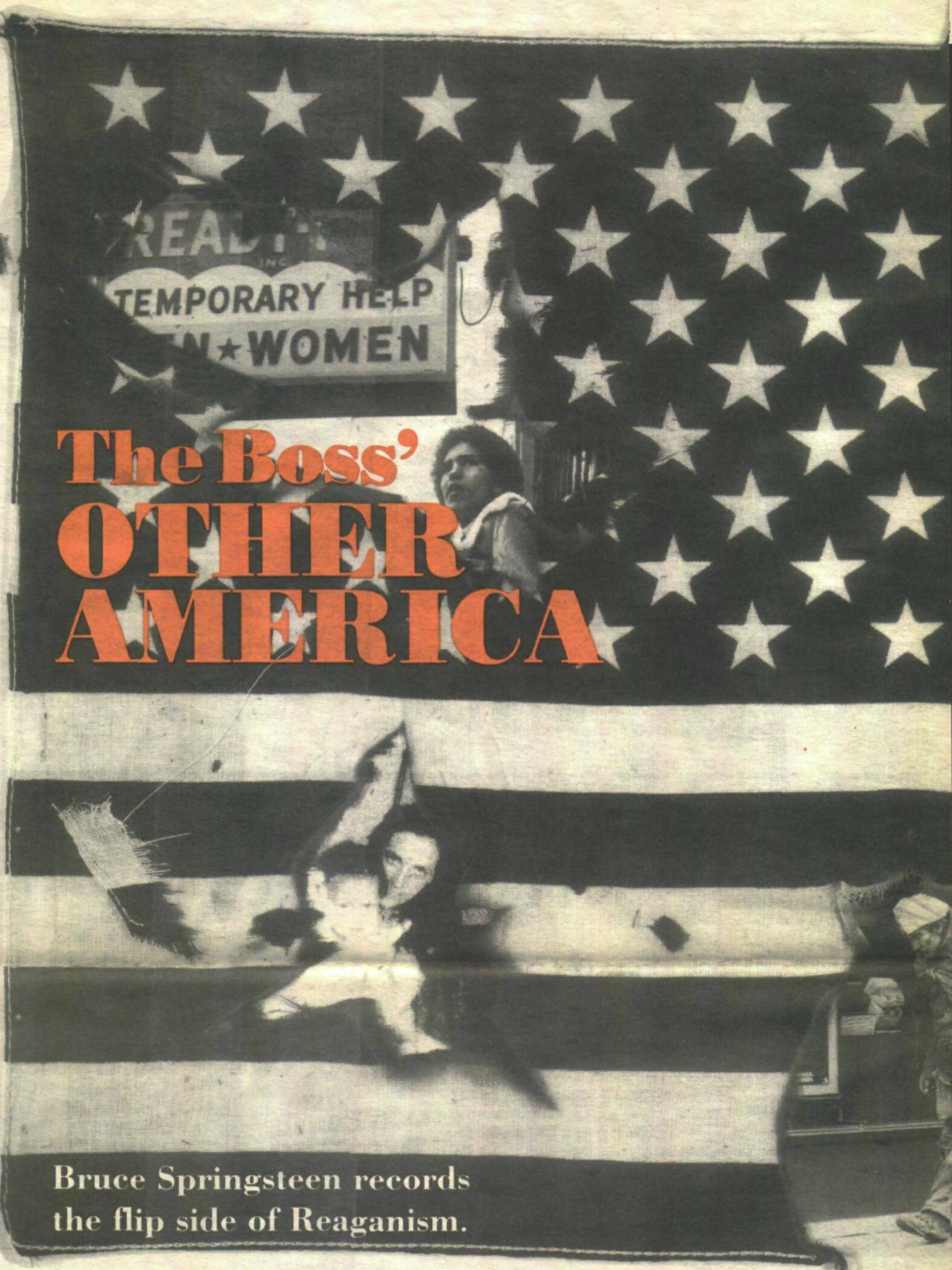
In "Seeds," a new song not yet on an album, Springsteen tells of unemployed workers from the Northeast who trek to the Southwest to find work in the oil fields. But by the time they arrive, oil prices have dropped. Production is down and jobs are short. With their families, they end up sleeping in cars and tents alongside the highway in a scene out of a modern *The Grapes of Wrath*. (Just wait until

Podhoretz, who charges Springsteen with reinforcing "the delusion that the Reagan era has plunged us back into the '30s," hears this one.)

There is the flag. It is certainly curious that a song, an album and an album cover that could reasonably lead one rock critic to ask Springsteen if he was "actually pissing on the flag" could all be taken as a display of blind patriotism. Fans at his shows carry flags of all sizes and boast to reporters that they "love America, just like Bruce." The power chords of "Born in the U.S.A." surge through media reports of a new mood in America.

But as even Podhoretz now realizes, *Born in the U.S.A.* is not theme music for Reaganism. What remains sad is that apparently many fans—not to mention media commentators who are paid to interpret such vexing concerns—could not see beyond the red and white stripes on the album's cover and the single refrain of the title track. Undoubtedly, this misinterpretation fueled album sales and increased Springsteen's popularity, though he surely has not catered to flag-waving scoundrels.

Rather, Springsteen, particularly in concert, delivers a political message that has left-leaning rock and rollers ready to claim him as their Great White Hope. His financial donations to various progressive causes





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So that is his prescription—individual activism. In keeping with his whole political approach, Springsteen calls on his audience to get involved with something close to home. At the show I saw at Giant Stadium, Springsteen, prior to singing “My Hometown,” encouraged the audience to contact either the Citizen Action Group of New Jersey or the New York Community Action Network, two grassroots organizations involved in voter registration, environmental issues and other activities.

“If you’re proud enough to shout about it, you’re able to do something about it,” he said, noting that these groups are “trying to give low- and middle-income citizens a bigger voice in the democratic process. They’re making these ideas I sing about real in everyday life. Without them and people like them, what I’m doing here tonight is just a bunch of words.... This is your hometown, so do something about it.”

Does the message come through? Few in the audience could sing along on “This Land Is Your Land,” while they matched Springsteen word for word (and grunt for grunt) on “Born to Run.” So enraptured are many Springsteen fans with the man and his music, they sit and listen intently to whatever he has to say. If anyone can reach them, it’s Springsteen. With all his charisma and earnestness he could out-Reagan Reagan.

There is something else in Springsteen’s corner—fun. For all the seriousness of some of his songs and the weighty concerns he raises, he is, as he shouts at the end of each show, “just a prisoner of rock and roll.” And the essence of rock and roll is exuberance—having a good time. Songs like “Cadillac Ranch,” “Thunder Road” and “Rosalita” show that all is not gloom and doom. Even though his songs offer a bleak picture of life within “a runaway American dream,” hope remains. Negativism and bad news will only be tolerated so much; there has to be a flip side, preferably one with a beat, that holds out hope—if not in words, then in the rush of the music. Within the vitality of the music a promise still lives.

What’s the promise? At a 1981 concert Springsteen explained that as a kid he would lie in bed at night with the radio under his pillow. It was in the rock and roll of the ‘60s that he heard a promise: “And it was just a promise of a right, a right to a decent life. That you didn’t have to live and die like my old man working in a factory until he couldn’t hear what you were saying to him anymore.”

His rhetoric, if sometimes vague, does bring home a basic message—at least to those who bother to listen. The flag wavers can keep trying to appropriate him. Certainly, Springsteen can be misinterpreted as preaching an escape from the rat trap by any means—make a few bucks and leave the dreary working class behind. Like Reagan, he climbed up from a lower-middle-class background. They both stand as symbols of American success.

But Springsteen does not advocate a yuppie-sque, go-for-it ethic. Nor does he endorse or celebrate the system by which he has so prospered. At the close of “This Land Is Your Land,” he said solemnly, “Remember, nobody wins, unless everybody wins.” It’s a retort to Reaganism and yuppism—a slogan that some daring Democrat might pick up one day. It’s a motto that Springsteen has repeated throughout his tour.

So who has America been celebrating? A working-class loner from New Jersey who has become a charismatic and sincere rocker with leftist sentiments and middle-class appeal. He has demonstrated concern for a host of issues: unemployment, hunger, homelessness, social welfare programs, the environment, U.S. military intervention in Central America and the arms race. (Dance-mix versions of some recent songs even won him “cross-over” air play on so-called “black” radio stations, though his concerts continue to be mostly all-white affairs.) Could he be the legendary left coalition incarnate—and a sex symbol to boot? No wonder Podhoretz is so nervous. Just remember where Reagan was when he was 35 years old.

serve as a fine example for his followers. But just as valuable are the themes and ideas he tries to bring across to the millions who flock to see him. Here the left might be able to pick up a pointer or two.

Springsteen reaches people. Though a good deal of his audience may get lost in the driving beat or flag waving, he is able to deliver his message in a fashion that encourages his audience to relate to it. His manner of doing so is reminiscent of Ronald Reagan. It is anecdotal, down-home in style and aimed at a gut level where facts and statistics are irrelevant. What counts is the ability of audience members to identify with the story or to confirm it with their own rough sense of what is going on. With his story-telling talent, Springsteen, in song and speech, has the power to draw his listener into the tale—that’s already half the battle—and then give him or her the opportunity to consider the larger issue at hand.

A personal tale

Here’s an example from a recent concert at Giant Stadium in New Jersey. With soft, ominous music playing behind him, Springsteen told of how he and his father were always at cross-swords when he was growing up. The scene: Springsteen stands outside his house late at night and tucks his shoulder-length hair under his collar, ready

for the inevitable confrontation with his father. He enters the dark house through a side door and starts to walk upstairs, thinking he’s home free. Then his father shouts his name. “We’d sit in the kitchen with all the lights out,” Springsteen recalled. “We wouldn’t say a word for 10 minutes. Then he’d say, ‘What are you doing with yourself.’ The worst part of it was I could never explain it.” The moral of the story: “When you’re young, it’s hard to understand the forces on your parents and why they act the way they sometimes do. He was having a hard time finding work all the time and that works hard on a person.”

Moral enough—parents got it rough. But there’s more: “We just came out of Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh, they’ve gone from 22,000 to 3,000 steelworker jobs. With the big steel mills disinvesting in our own country, the jobs go away, but the people don’t. They end up left out alone in the cold.” He takes out a harmonica and goes into “The River,” the ballad of a working-class couple who live, as he puts it, “in a shadow of a dream.”

On the printed page, this song intro may not come across as all that impressive. But before a crowd of 65,000 it was a genuinely moving moment. Moreover, note the linkage: from adolescent alienation and parent trouble to an individual tale of the hardship

of unemployment to an institutional problem with our economy. Springsteen tied it all together. (This represents some progress on his part. Four years ago when he did a similar rap on tour, he stopped short of noting the bigger picture.) Even if you have never been in such a situation, you can immediately empathize with Springsteen and his father and see their conflict as a human-scale representation of a larger dilemma.

Springsteen’s focus is on the individual toll. He serves up vignettes of those who have been screwed by the system. The larger indictment is implicit. When he is on stage, it is more evident—perhaps just in case George Will is in the audience. At Giant Stadium, for his first encore, Springsteen delivered a slow and somber version of “This Land Is Your Land” and called it “the greatest song that’s ever been written about America, about the promise of what our country was supposed to be about.”

He continued: “That’s a promise eroding for many of our citizens”—specifically, the farmers in the Midwest, the steelworkers in Pennsylvania’s Monongahela Valley, and the residents of East Los Angeles. “These folks,” Springsteen told the crowd, “are not sure if it’s still true. But I know it should be. And I know you can make a difference.”

LETTERS

In defense of Paz

GENE BELL-VILLADA'S REVIEW OF OCTAVIO Paz' collected essays, *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds*, inadvertently proves Paz' point about Western intellectuals "who call themselves leftist" and who are "deaf to arguments" about the myth and tragedy of contemporary revolution, and who reveal a "naiveté bordering on complicity" about the terror of Communist regimes.

A left-wing writer in the Latin American social democratic tradition, Paz defends the essential legitimacy of democracy in both Latin America and the West as a *sine qua non* for peace, social justice and economic development. But Bell-Villada prefers to deal with Paz' sophisticated analysis by branding him as "certainly not leftist," as one who sides "squarely with the Western neo-conservative camp," whose book purportedly ends with "the heady Reaganism of the final essays" (except, of course, where the reviewer agrees with Paz; i.e., "Paz can be quite sensible on Israel.")

What the reviewer seems to object to is Paz' defense of democracy. Paz understands, for example, that "it is not easy for any Nicaraguan to forget the fatal intervention of the United States in the internal affairs of the country for more than a century, nor its complicity with the Somoza dynasty." Yet he asks: "But do past grievances, which justify anti-Americanism, justify pro-Sovietism?" The reviewer's failure to address this issue suggests that he thinks the answer is yes. Paz criticizes the Sandinistas for failing to explore "a path of independent action that would neither deliver [Nicaragua] into the hands of Washington nor turn the country into a bridgehead of the Soviet Union." Is such a criticism really so wide of the mark?

As for Cuba, Paz makes it clear that Washington followed a "disdainful and hostile" policy in 1959 that forced Castro to seek Moscow's friendship. But he believes this reality does not justify or legitimize the path taken by the Cuban revolution. Ironically, it is the balance of Paz' position that leads Larry D. Nachman, the reviewer of the Paz book for *Commentary*, to charge that Paz argues that "the United States...acted wrongly and destructively in Latin America...has obstructed modernization, favored dic-

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tatorships, and corrupted political institutions. In short, the United States has been an enemy of democracy and equality," and he calls Paz' conclusion that the U.S. should stop supporting right-wing dictatorships "unrealistic." Nor does *Commentary's* neo-conservative like Paz' view, as Nachman put it, that the U.S. "has not done what it could to create a more equitable distribution of wealth among nations."

So the *ITT* reviewer calls Paz a Reaganite and a neo-conservative; the *Commentary* reviewer calls him a social-democrat who shares leftist assumptions. Paz, this reader thinks, must be saying something right.

Ronald Radosh
New York, N.Y.

Gene Bell-Villada replies: Radosh's smug myopia epitomizes all the current confusion of U.S. center-right thinking.

(1) *RE Paz' criticisms of U.S. policy toward Cuba and Nicaragua:* my review specified, "a short chapter actually sees the U.S. as chief obstacle to positive change in Latin America, but the effect is cancelled out by the rest of the book." Radosh's letter proved my point.

(2) *Nicaragua "bridgehead of the Soviet Union":* Reagan's Big Lie is sure doing its work. On which Nicaraguan coast is that Soviet bridgehead located? Where are the Russian bombers, warships, the Red Army? To frame Nicaraguan issues in "Soviet" terms is pure Reaganite sci-fi. And when Moscow offers aid to the Sandinistas, are they to spurn it? Did we shun Soviet support in 1942-45 (the years of "Uncle Joe")?

(3) *"Paz' defense of democracy":* against what? Paz relentlessly attacks Castro and the Sandinistas, and not once mentions Chile, Paraguay, Guatemala, etc. For Paz, "democracy" has come to mean whatever isn't Marxism (including those military chiefs, 90 percent of whom were Somocistas).

(4) *"The terror of Communist regimes":* this '50s slogan is a drug that

dims the mind. Where is there more state terror today—Guatemala or Hungary? Chile or Yugoslavia? For Paz and his Yankee fans, Communism is evil incarnate, and anything, even Chilean or Guatemalan fascism, is better. Shades of the '30s.

(5) *Commentary magazine?* As William Phillips (no leftist) observed in *Partisan Review*, the mentality of Podhoretz and company has become indistinguishable from that of National Review Buckleyites. Citing a right-wing publication doesn't help Radosh's credibility. Besides, "social democrat" is hardly a bad word for the *Commentary* folks who are the commanding heights of (as Christopher Hitchens wryly dubbed them) "Social Democrats USA! USA!"

(6) *"Paz must be saying something right":* yes, to would-be centrists, whose ground is being fast reduced to empty rhetoric and illusion.

That "left-wing writer in the Latin American social democratic tradition" is a figment of Radosh's academic yanqui mind. (What tradition? What writers?) Radosh should read *Labyrinth of Solitude*. It's much better writing, as is Paz' poetry.

Gag

ICAN'T HELP GAGGING ON NPR PRESIDENT Douglas Bennett's sanctimonious defense of his news programs as "balanced" because they do not yield to "people who would rather have NPR's news wrapped up ... in neat ideological packages" (*ITT*, Sept. 4).

Leftists who are criticizing "Morning Edition" and "All Things Considered" are hardly asking that they carry an hour, or even 20 minutes, of daily Marxist analysis. All we ask is substantial relief from the domination of NPR news "commentary" by representatives of the Reaganite right and from the unimaginative—and, in the present political climate, inevitably conservative—reporting of foreign affairs, lately featuring "on the spot" interviews in Thailand, El Salvador and Lebanon with *New York Times* reporters.

David Barsamian has put the matter succinctly in *Audience* (July 1985): "NPR's ideological and cultural prejudices are now aligned with its brethren at CBS and elsewhere. The news content, less the dog food and dishwasher commercials, is quite similar."

Richard Du Boff
Haverford, Pa.

Freeze gets hot

IMUST TAKE ISSUE WITH YOUR ASSERTION (*ITT*, Editorial, Sept 4) that Freeze activists have not publicly supported Soviet Premier Gorbachev's recent arms control proposals in a silence which is part of a larger refusal to address the Cold War myths that perpetuate a distorted view of the Soviet Union. I cannot speak for the movement as a whole, but certainly the Philadelphia Nuclear Freeze has consistently addressed these issues.

In February, for instance, a member of our board who has studied and traveled in Russia delivered a talk on "American myths and Soviet realities." The discussion was well attended and well received. It was also ignored by community media, which refused to print a precis of the talk. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, on the other hand, did print

a short article, as did we in our newsletter.

As for the alleged inattention to Gorbachev's initiatives, our May-June newsletter urged its 5,500 readers to write both President Reagan and Premier Gorbachev in support of Gorbachev's six-month moratorium on deployment of intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe. In respect to his most recent initiative, the test ban moratorium, I wrote a letter to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* urging public consideration, free of Cold War hype, of the test ban proposal. Although the *Inquirer* printed the letter, they excised the information that I was writing and speaking for the Philadelphia Freeze.

I suspect that you overlook the efforts undertaken by many local Freeze groups to combat "evil empire" rhetoric. You at *In These Times* should know better than to look to mainstream media for your information, which you seem to have done in this case, as most of your material appeared in recent *New York Times* articles. Remember: the grassroots is often the vanguard, and grassroots groups are working hard, often without acknowledgement, to combat the Cold War stereotypes you decry.

Joanne M. Stearns
Philadelphia, Pa.

No sympathy

IN RESPONSE TO AARON FARRIS' LETTER, (*ITT*, Sept. 4): I'm sorry he's never gotten his money's worth from any prostitute he has picked up. Perhaps he just assumed the women were prostitutes and not just looking for a good time.

Sorry, even with his detailed story, sounds like sour grapes to me. In any business there are honest workers and entrepreneurs and rip-offs. Especially in an illegal business, the buyer must beware.

I, too, know fellas who've been robbed or injured by prostitutes, but I know more women who've been robbed, ripped off, injured and killed by clients, pimps and lovers.

If you have "another \$100" to spend, plus the cash you spent on condiments (drugs), you should try an "escort" service. Why not set aside some of your procuring money and take some gal out? If you feel wives are superior to prostitutes, then marry. Even better, if your need for sexual release is so great (and you can't get your money's worth), jerk off. Shop around. What is your money's worth of ass?

Most prostitutes are not thieves and they get their asses kicked because the pimps and johns know they can get away with it. If prostitution were legalized the women and their clients might have a better chance for a fair deal.

But from the tone of your letter it would seem you'd rather get your "pieces" for free. There's no free lunch and no free sex, regardless of what you've been told.

Denise Thomas
Pontiac, Mich.

Twisted lust

AARON FARRIS' LETTER WAS A PRIME EXAMPLE of the fear and loathing that some men have for women (*ITT*, Sept. 4). He refers to women with a sense of superiority that is frankly repulsive. He complains of being exploited by prostitutes. Actually, he is being exploited by his own twisted lust and foul hatred. Farris is allowing his actions to be dictated from his balls, not his brain. If he didn't foster such a hatred of women, he might not need to rely on a professional for sexual contact.

Alan M. Jacobson
DeKalb, Ill.

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STQ1

PERSPECTIVES

Peace plan for Central America

By E. Bradford Burns

LATIN AMERICANS POSSESS a diplomatic agenda of their own, and they have become more assertive in expressing it. At the conclusion of their recent meeting in Cartagena, the foreign ministers of eight major Latin American democracies proposed a peace plan for Central America. They want to accomplish what has eluded the four Contadora nations for the past two-and-a-half years. Significantly, these nations—Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina—contain 85 percent of the 370 million Latin Americans. Their unified voice should command international attention and respect. Their plan contains a ray of hope for an otherwise beclouded region.

The crises in Central America alarm these democracies. They regard the intensifying warfare, militarization and foreign interventions as threatening the shaky democratic future of Latin America. A U.S. invasion of Nicaragua might spark a political explosion throughout Latin America, the declaration of Cartagena warns. "If a peaceful and negotiated solution is not found for the Central American conflict, this will affect the political and social stability of all Latin America," it says.

As an alternative to the escalating wars, the eight nations propose a diplomatic settlement in order to end the regional conflict, to prevent subversions of government by outside forces and to verify that each of the five Central American nations honors the peace plan. President Belisario Bantancur of Colombia, the host for the conference, summed up the goals of those attending the conference, "We consider it urgent to halt the arms race, to forbid foreign intervention in the area in all its manifestations and to prevent actions aimed at destabilizing the governments of the region." The participants realize that in the final analysis only economic development can insure stability, but they also understand that no such development can take place so long as war ravages the region.

The eight foreign ministers hope to rescue the faltering Contadora peace process, while signifying the intentions of Latin Americans who contribute to the resolution of problems within their own region. The insistence with which these democratic governments assert their leadership contrasts markedly with the historically passive international behavior of Latin America, particularly when facing a determined North American administration. Under unrelenting pressure and promises from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the Latin American governments condemned revolutionary Guatemala in 1954 and averted their eyes when the CIA overthrew its constitutionally and democratically elected president. In the '60s, importuned by Washington, they isolated Cuba commercially and diplomatically. Such acquiescence is unlikely now.

Cartagena could well signal a turning point in Latin American diplomacy. Clearly the democratic governments exert more independence of action than their military predecessors did. That independence should be seen positively now that Washington makes a great fetish of advocating pluralism in Latin America.

The declaration of Cartagena offers Washington an opportunity to withdraw militarily from Central America and to

avoid further intervention. It could defuse the major crises of the isthmus and—if the concerns of the democratic governments are credited—a grave potential crisis within all of Latin America. Further, the proposal promises Washington the security it demands: no Soviet or Cuban military presence. The Latin Americans will guarantee it. Cooperating with these eight nations would give Washington a splendid opportunity to strengthen the democratic process of Latin America.

The message to Washington from Cartagena increases the pressure on President

Reagan to support a peaceful solution. But while the administration has paid feeble lip service to a peaceful solution to the Central American crises, Reagan thus far has preferred military actions. A deaf ear to the entreaties from Cartagena, however, will only increase estrangement from the U.S. within the hemisphere. At no time in the 20th century has U.S. leadership in the Americas been less effective or more seriously challenged. ■

E. Bradford Burns teaches Latin American History at the University of California-Los Angeles.

Unleashing the CIA in Reagan's war?

By Joy Hackel & Daniel Siegel

LATER THIS MONTH, THE White House will again ask legislators on Capitol Hill to unleash the CIA against Nicaragua. As Congress debates whether to renew the "Boland Amendment," a congressional ban on CIA involvement with the *contras*, it would be wise to recall how the Reagan administration has consistently lied to Congress and the American people about its intention to topple the Sandinista government.

The activities of Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North of the National Security Council presents an insidious example. Without the knowledge or consent of Congress, North has been busy directing *contra* tactical operations, acting as a liaison for *contra* fundraising drives and orchestrating the *contra* lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill.

Why did Reagan officials find it necessary to conceal North's role and "hide" the *contra* war within the National Security Council? The Boland Amendment prohibits the CIA, the Defense Department and all other intelligence agencies from supplying the *contras* with advice, military materiel, personnel or training. Yet North's activities clearly support the *contra* cause and defy congressional stipulations.

Equally troublesome are the recent confessions of Edgar Chamorro, a former director of the FDN, the largest *contra*

group and a leader hand-picked by the CIA (see *In These Times*, Sept. 4). According to Chamorro, the covert war has targeted not only the Sandinistas but members of the U.S. Congress. "The CIA men didn't have much respect for Congress," recalls Chamorro. "They said we could change how representatives voted as long as we knew how to 'sell' our case and place them in a position of looking soft on Communism. They suggested members whom we should lobby and gave us the names of big shots we should contact in their home districts." The CIA is explicitly prohibited from such lobbying efforts by the president's own executive order.

Moreover, the administration has misled Congress regarding the make-up of the *contra* forces. Earlier this year, Langhorne Motley, former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, testified before Congress that "the freedom fighters are peasants, farmers, shopkeepers and vendors. Their leaders are without exception men who opposed Somoza." However, a study issued last spring by a bipartisan congressional caucus specializing in foreign policy found that 46 of the 48 leaders of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force are former National Guardsmen of the late dictator, Anastasio Somoza.

The administration even lied about its original justification for supporting the *contra* army. In congressional testimony, officials argued that the covert war was necessary to interdict arms flowing from the Sandinistas to Salvadoran insurgents. While Undersecretary of Defense Fred

Ikle testified that the Salvadorans obtained "the largest percentage of [their] munitions from Nicaragua," only months earlier a classified cable from the U.S. embassy in San Salvador admitted that "the insurgents may have obtained most of their newly acquired firearms through capture from the Salvadoran military."

These deceptions underscore a larger pattern of deceit and illegality by White House policymakers. A report entitled "In Contempt of Congress" released earlier this year by Sens. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and John Kerry (D-MA) details a systematic record of deception. The report, prepared by the Institute for Policy Studies, reveals 77 instances in which the Congress has been deceived or misled by Reagan officials concerning their activities in Central America. The report also cites 15 possible violations of domestic and international law by the administration.

In public, the U.S. allegedly supports the efforts of the Contadora group—Colombia, Panama, Venezuela and Mexico—to forge a negotiated settlement. Yet a secret background paper prepared for a meeting of the National Security Council last year boasted that the administration had "effectively blocked Contadora group efforts."

A few months after "effectively block[ing]" the draft Contadora treaty, the Reagan administration unilaterally suspended bilateral talks with the Sandinistas in Manzanillo, Mexico. Then this spring, as part of an all-out campaign to persuade Congress to grant aid to the *contras*, President Reagan pledged without qualification to resume the Manzanillo discussions. Despite the president's promise and offers by the Nicaraguans to renew the negotiations, Secretary of State George Shultz, in late July, flatly rejected the idea of direct talks with the Sandinistas. The *New York Times* recently reported that the Reagan administration has "virtually ruled out any possibility of reaching a bilateral peace agreement with Nicaragua."

When promises of peace and negotiated settlements serve as mere window dressing for secret wars, murder manuals and escalating militarism, Congress and the public are robbed of their voice to debate and influence the conduct of foreign affairs.

Congress must once again draw the line against President Reagan's reckless war in Central America by prohibiting the CIA from reopening its bag of dirty tricks against the government of Nicaragua. ■

Joy Hackel and Daniel Siegel are research associates at the Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C. Their articles have appeared in the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Des Moines Register.

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PERSPECTIVES

Americans shouldn't be so quick to mock Soviet peace groups

By Norman Solomon

A FEW BLOCKS FROM THE last subway stop on Moscow's red line, beleaguered members of the Group to Establish Trust Between the USSR and U.S.A. have been gathering in a small apartment. "We are non-critical non-dissidents," they tell visitors. But neither admirers nor detractors seem to comprehend this small Moscow group, which is neither fish nor fowl in the frigid waters of the Cold War.

Assessments of the Group to Establish Trust can be easily overstated—and usually are. One view maintains that the Soviet government's persecution of these courageous peace activists exposes the Kremlin's hypocrisy on disarmament issues; another version portrays the Trust Group as inherently counterproductive lightning rods for anti-Soviet propaganda. Such simplicities hide paradoxes that can—and should—trouble U.S. disarmament advocates seeking bridges across the superpower gulf.

These days about 50 Moscow residents

participate in Trust Group activities such as anti-nuclear dramatic readings and impromptu "street actions" with hand-held signs for disarmament. A word-of-mouth support network is said to number about 1,000 individuals in the city. Meanwhile at the spacious Moscow headquarters of the Soviet Peace Committee, officials note their sanctioned organization's success in mobilizing millions of citizens to attend disarmament rallies and other events. More than ever, Peace Committee chapters in hundreds of Soviet cities are widely disseminating information about the horrendous consequences of nuclear war. It is an educational role seldom credited in the West, where few are inclined to believe that much good can come from an institution sponsored by the Soviet state.

While direct contacts are rare, Trust Group members can be heard referring to Peace Committee officials as "fellow peaceniks." For their part, Peace Committee leaders prefer not to discuss the Trust Group. At a mid-July meeting in Moscow, when I mentioned the new indictment of a Trust Group member, the Committee's first vice chairman Oleg Kharkhardin was curt. "It is not one of the problems that are of any significance to the Soviet peace movement," he replied. "If some people in the West pay excessive attention to the intrigues started by a group of Western correspondents in Moscow, around a small group, a dozen people who have applied for exit visas for emigration to Israel and at the same time proclaim themselves to be peace champions, well that's the business of those people."

For a time most in the Trust Group were highly-educated Jews seeking exit visas. Presently the 11-member "central core" includes three Jews, each of whom sought to leave the Soviet Union and eight non-Jews who have never attempted to emigrate. But this is less significant than the Group's insistence on organizing without state authorization, an independent course seen—at best—as quixotic by Soviet functionaries. "I would prefer not to believe accounts in the press here that these people are trying to accumulate more money by leaving the country and advancing their careers," one Peace Committee official told me privately late one night. He paused. "I would suppose, instead, that they are romantics." Another pause. "And in this society they are not relevant."

The outlook is different, of course, from the Trust Group's makeshift headquarters at the southwest Moscow apartment of Olga and Yuri Medvedkov. For three years now the Group has made its way along the cusp of possible evolutions in Soviet life. "We exist very much as a symbol in this country," Yuri Medvedkov told me. Despite unity with the basic Peace Committee themes of detente, peaceful coexistence and nuclear disarmament, the Trust Group has found that its structural autonomy gets it into intermittent hot water.

The Trust Group this summer was preoccupied with the prosecution of core member Vladimir Brodsky, a 41-year-old physician accused of "malicious hooliganism." When I met Brodsky in July, a week after his indictment, the worry was evident. "We've had a lot of

favorable indications in recent months," Medvedkov said as Brodsky nodded. "Then, this assault." On August 15 a Moscow court sentenced him to three years in prison.

In bad times Medvedkov is apt to repeat a favorite saying, posted on a bookcase: "Expect a miracle." There have been both ominous and encouraging precedents: a Group founder, Alexander Shatravka, has been in prison for more than three years now. Olga Medvedkov three months pregnant in March 1984 when she went on trial for her activity, ended up with a light suspended sentence, later covered by a general amnesty.

A society in flux

Trust Group members suppose the Kremlin hierarchy was not involved with Brodsky's prosecution. They attribute the repressive move to factions within certain Soviet agencies wishing to establish a hardline tone during the initial period of Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership. "Our society is in an absolutely crucial, formative phase," maintained Yuri Medvedkov, 57, a renowned geographer. He bristled at the evil-empire concept. "It is tremendously wrong to paint the Soviet Union with one color," he said, citing self-correcting mechanisms within Soviet institutions. As for any notions of attempting to "destabilize" the USSR, he is unequivocally opposed.

"From the very beginning we wanted it known that we are not dissidents," Medvedkov stressed. "We do not emphasize criticizing the structure of the Soviet state. Our goals are direct people-to-people contact and diminishing of hatred between East and West, which can be achieved right now." Early this summer, when Trust Group members held disarmament signs as they planted public "Flower Beds of Peace" in Moscow ("Not 'gardens,'" Medvedkov corrected me with a wry smile, "after all, we're a small group."), Western journalists were present as police uprooted the flowers; arrests resulted in some 10-day jail sentences. While prone to label Trust Group members "dissidents," Western media have shown little interest in the Group's ideas, such as a proposal to ban all children's war toys resembling modern military weapons—an idea with the poorest prospects of implementation in the capitalist West. Most of all the Group remains eager to convey the belief that, in Olga Medvedkov's words, "It isn't weapons that kill people, it's hatred. Trust between people at the grassroots is essential."

The U.S. peace movement's own experiences routinely color its perceptions of pro-disarmament activities inside the Soviet Union. Yet there are fundamental differences.

Enjoying relative freedom to organize independently, American disarmament advocates voice opposition as their government zooms along full-throttle with the nuclear arms race in tow. In the Soviet Union advocates of a bilateral nuclear freeze and mutual disarmament steps are part of a huge "disarmament movement" that is officially sanctioned. Increasingly, government policy contexts differ: the five-month unilateral moratorium on nuclear test explosions put into effect on August 6 by Gorbachev, and rejected by President Reagan, indicates that the Soviet Union's current nuclear policies are less irresponsible than the Reagan policies being unsuccessfully challenged by the American movement.

This casts an odd shadow on the smugness of Americans who mock the official "Soviet peace movement" because it does not cross the Soviet government. Many who consider themselves "peace activists" as they work under the Soviet Peace Committee umbrella are contributing to a social climate of reverence for peace. (Curiously, some Americans who cannot con-

ceive of any value of the officially-backed peace organizations in the USSR can also be heard bemoaning the administration's opposition to establishing a Peace Academy.)

"Peace" as an overarching goal is more highly touted in Soviet society than in the U.S.—a consequence of government emphasis as well as the USSR's enormous toll in World War II. The Russian word *mir* (peace) can be seen on large signs in Soviet communities as frequently as liquor and cigarette billboards appear in typical American cities.

At an official peace rally I attended in the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don in late July, about 800 townspeople gathered in the park alongside the Don River. All the speakers denounced nuclear war and called for bilateral U.S.-Soviet disarmament with fervent conviction. The event bore many similarities to an American nuclear freeze rally (including the apparent passive roles of most participants). A

The Russian word mir (peace) is seen on large signs in Soviet towns as often as liquor and cigarette billboards here.

common theme emerged at meetings with local Peace Committees in a half-dozen other Soviet cities: 40 years ago our mutual enemy was fascism; today it is nuclear war, which would destroy humanity.

Trust Group views

At times Soviet emigrés, including a few from the Group to Establish Trust, engage in anti-Soviet polemics after they settle in the West. This is not what is desired, however, by the core of the Trust Group back in Moscow. More than a survival device in hazardous circumstances, the desire to be "non-critical, non-dissident" independent Soviet peace activists is tied in with a belief that the Soviet system has improved itself and will continue to do so—and that ailments of Soviet society can best be healed without adversarial verbiage.

One midsummer night, as Moscow's late dusk settled through the Medvedkovs' living-room window, I met with a dozen members of the Trust Group, ranging in age from teens to over 60. They asked to hear about Martin Luther King Jr., and I spoke for an hour as Yuri Medvedkov translated. Questions inevitably led to the current U.S. disarmament movement. Telling about the four "plowshares" activists who used a compressor-drive jackhammer in an effort to disarm a Missouri nuclear missile silo last November, I mentioned that two of them received prison sentences of 18 years. Shocked disbelief showed on some of the Russian faces.

For all our relative freedom to dissent in the U.S., nuclear explosions are scheduled to rock the southern Nevada desert as usual this autumn, while Soviet testing grounds will remain still. The real likelihood exists that the U.S. will lead the way to global annihilation. We have failed to see our concerns reflected in restraint on our own government's nuclear escalation. Notwithstanding all of the restrictions on civil liberties inside the USSR, the much-disparaged Soviet peace movement has done better than that.

Norman Solomon is co-author of *Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Radiation*. He is disarmament director for the Fellowship of Reconciliation in the U.S.

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By Greg Gaut

ACADEMIC STUDY OF THE Soviet Union got off to a bad start in the U.S., and it still hasn't quite recovered. The problem was that its initial impulse was the Cold War mentality of the early '50s. Scholars were encouraged to study the Soviet Union not to unravel its rich complexity, but to produce quick and simple policy analysis that would play well in the State Department and the Pentagon during the anti-Communist hysteria.

These two books chart a different course. Stephen Cohen's *Rethinking the Soviet Experience* is a manifesto for a different approach to the history of the Soviet Union. Rather than writing history "backwards" from the starting point of Western Cold War biases, he argues for the necessity of beginning with the social and cultural realities of Tsarist and revolutionary Russia and working toward an analysis based on empirical research. Moshe Lewin's *Making of the Soviet System* is a collection of essays that demonstrate in practice what this "revisionist" history can offer.

Cohen argues that post-war Soviet studies quickly developed a consensus on all the major historical issues facing students of the revolution and its aftermath. One overriding interpretation, the "totalitarian school," had all the answers. The fact that this interpretation is wrong was not the only problem. It also led to an intellectual crisis: if every significant question was asked and answered, what was the point of Soviet studies?

The story told by the "totalitarian school" goes something like this: the Bolsheviks, a small and unrepresentative party, usurped power in October 1917 by conspiratorial means. Led by its ruthless and dogmatic leader Lenin, the party was by this time already "embryonically" totalitarian, and the rest of Soviet history was determined by the dynamic it set in motion. The party quickly created a totalitarian state, and then fought and won the civil war (1918-1921) on the basis of its iron discipline and organization.

Exhausted by the war, it temporarily "retreated" during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP), a less authoritative set of policies that lasted until 1929. Then Stalin resumed the totalitarian assault on society, fulfilling the "inevitable" consequences of the 1917 revolution. After the forced collectivization of the peasantry and the rapid industrialization, a monolithic, terroristic state was solidified, which rules, omnipotent and unchanging, over a passive, frozen society of atomized citizens.

Stalin's crimes

During the '60s, this interpretation began to unravel. First, there was Khrushchev's dramatic exposé of Stalin's crimes (or at least some of them) at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, followed by a gen-

eral "de-Stalinization" and then detente with the West. None of these developments could be adequately explained by the "totalitarian" model.

Meanwhile, a new generation of Soviet specialists came of age in the '60s. They were skeptical of Cold War ideology. Unlike their predecessors, they had the opportunity to study in the Soviet Union, making use of the exchange programs that began in 1958. The gray stereotypes of the "totalitarian" model were no longer satisfying to those who had experienced the multicolored reality of Soviet society first hand.

And so a revisionist school was born, which has produced a large body of work to which Cohen provides a roadmap. Revisionist scholars, some of whom, like Moshe Lewin, were from an older generation, began to produce studies that challenged the formerly unquestionable axioms. Hardly Bolshevik apologists, they nevertheless demonstrated that the Party was diverse and democratic in 1917, and that it succeeded because of its ability to express the genuine mass upsurge that Russia experienced in 1917.

The period of the New Economic Program was also reinterpreted. Rather than a temporary retreat prior to a renewed march to totalitarianism, the period of 1921-1928 is now seen as a time when various divergent tendencies within Bolshevism struggled for answers to the different situation left by World War I, the Civil War and international isolation.

Both Cohen and Lewin focus on 1928, when Stalin consolidated his power and led the Party away from the NEP and into forced collectivization and rapid industrialization. Cohen's own contribution to the revisionist cause was his ground-breaking biography of Nikolai Bukharin, the Bolshevik leader who defended the mixed economy approach of the NEP against Stalin. Bukharin argued that the NEP was not a "retreat" but in fact the necessary approach for building socialism in a backward, agrarian country like Russia. For Cohen, Bukharin's policies were an alternative to Stalinism, which was anything but inevitable.

Cohen also casts post-Stalin Russia in a different light. He believes that there is "something akin to two distinct parties—reformist and conservative—formed inside Soviet officialdom and even inside the Communist Party itself, counterposing rival interests, policies, ideas and values in all political quarters." Conservatives favor the highly centralized status quo while the reformists favor decentralization, a more consumer-oriented economy and more interaction with the West. Not surprisingly, the two "parties" disagree totally about the historical meaning of Stalinism.

Conservatives argue that Stalin was necessary, that modernization and the victory over fascism would not have been possible without Stalinism and its "excesses." The reformers argue the opposite, that the victories came in spite of Stalin, and increasingly, argues Cohen, the reformers see Bukharin as a symbol for the reforms of the future.

Focusing on peasants

While many Eastern European emigrés have become "totalitarian" school academics, Polish-born Moshe Lewin is one of its most effective critics. Now 64, he



SOVIET STUDIES

Revisionist history breaks through Cold War biases

has been a ground-breaking social historian of Russia, focusing especially on the forced collectivization of the peasantry. His book is a collection of new and previously published essays on the development of Stalinism.

Both Lewin's method and his findings, like Cohen, challenge the "totalitarian" school. Cold War historians focus on the Bolshevik Party as the sole agent of history, implying that it was immune to turbulent social upheaval of the period. Lewin is interested in the social realities of Russia, especially its relatively undeveloped and almost wholly agrarian character, and seeks to show that the nitty-gritty of the Russian social order acted on the party at least as much as the party acted on it.

To understand the broader social canvas, Lewin argues, it is necessary to start with the peasantry, the overwhelming majority of Russia that never ruled but dominated just the same. The key is to see the peasantry as "a social system with its own specific culture, heavily pressed on by cities, mar-

kets, railroads, the state and wars to change and to adapt—and yet surviving in its village shell and traditional forms and institutions despite all the inroads of the 20th century."

Lewin is fascinated by this "world in its own right, not really from our own time" and thinks that the failure to take it into account plagued Russia's urban revolutionaries as well as modern historians.

The peasantry displayed a remarkable ability to weather all the storms of government reforms, world war, revolution and civil war. Not so in the cities. He argues that by the end of the Civil War, all the economic and cultural gains that Russia had made since the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 had been wiped out. The Civil War also transformed the Bolshevik Party. The party began 1917 with 24,000 members, grew to 300,000 by the revolution, then was decimated by the Civil War. New recruits were largely illiterate and had no collective memory of the days when the Party was alive with real political debate.

Given this state of affairs, it is not surprising that a police state could develop in Russia and undertake revolutions from above. The Bolsheviks faced an enormous problem, and Stalin provided one answer; the NEP program was another viable answer, which could have led elsewhere. Neither was an inevitable outcome of 1917, and nothing was determined in advance by the events of 1917, as the "totalitarian" school argues.

Although Cohen, Lewin and others have changed the terrain of Soviet studies, the "totalitarian" school has not withered away. It made something of a comeback with the ascendancy of Reagan, whose pronouncements on the "evil empire" are rooted in the work of "totalitarian" scholars, some of whom have been his advisers. But historians like Cohen and Lewin have opened things up and may have saved Sovietologists from themselves.

Greg Gaut is a graduate student in Russian history and a freelance writer for *Monthly Review*, *City Pages* and the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*.

ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

MUSIC

Funk meets Jah on British charts



Bob Marley's "roots" music is merging with other black idioms in the U.K.

By Simon Frith

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO TONY Blackburn was the best known and most loathed disc-jockey in Britain. He fronted BBC Radio 1's Breakfast Show, told bad jokes and smothered the music he played in a kind of unctuous treacle. For rock fans throughout the '70s he was the epitome of the false, a smirking counterpoint to the BBC's "real" dj, John Peel. But even plastic goods lose their lustre and eventually Blackburn slid down the BBC ladder as rapidly as he'd ascended it. He was moved to the weekend children's shows, denied plum promo spots, finally left Radio 1 altogether. He has a local program now, on BBC Radio London. Each morning he plays soul records and has smutty conversations with women on the phone. His audience is small but fervent: Blackburn has become *the* cult dj. But if his status has changed, he hasn't. He's as ingratiating in 1985 as he was in 1970 and plays much the same sort of music. He's still Aftershave Man, a suburban philistine, mouthing platitudes from the soft center of pop taste.

And that's the point of this story: in Britain, black American music is the soft center of pop taste. For more than 20 years now, black music has been the background noise of fun and sex and growing up. Rock and roll remains rooted in adolescence; adult pleasures are marked by more sophisticated, insinuating sounds. The final twist in the tale is that while

Radio 1 still simperingly cultivates its "youth market," a new generation of pirate radio stations is eating into audience figures by following the Blackburn line.

The specter now haunting Europe is the dollar. "Ahh," sigh the editorials, "if only we could be like the 'new' U.S.A...." But that's been the pop message since the decade began. It's conveniently forgotten now, but Kid Creole was the model for Britain's new pop—he set the style for

urban contemporary cocktail music (whose biggest star isn't Frankie but Sade), and the Reagan message reached us long ago, via black culture. Hip hop stands for do-it-yourself enterprise; electro for the new technology; all those pop-funk groups for God-thanking, patriotic hedonism.

Reggae and hip hop

This reading may be wrong, but it's how black music—from Lionel Richie to Washington Go-

Go—reaches us: in a swirl of hard-earned success, like the interval display in a Super Bowl. The obvious contrast is reggae, which has always been marginal to British pop experience. The BBC has never had a national reggae show (shunting the music off instead to local "community" slots) and the Gallup organization has only this month started including reggae shops in the market research that determines sales charts and play-lists. The official treatment of reg-

gae reflects (and confirms) its ghetto status. In black British slang reggae is "yardy music," the language of Rastafarianism and Jamaican folk tales, a smoky screen to hide behind.

Compare reggae and black U.S. imagery and you get an obvious ideological split: spiritualism versus materialism. Reggae musicians articulate a disdain for commercial banality, work with a glorious sense that they are, with Jah's blessing, vehicles for the music of the spheres. Funk musicians, equally gloriously, celebrate their own free enterprise. It's tempting to pitch the consequent youth styles (obvious enough on the streets) against each other, like mods and rockers: on one side the ganja-smoking, tam-wearing yardies, blocking off space for the hard and holy sounds of Aswad and Misty in Roots. On the other side the black casuals, the burgeoning break crews and posses, strutting through the streets to the upwardly mobile music of Junior and the Galaxy.

But sub-cultural styles aren't just a matter of taste. They're available as alternative political strategies that have more or less bite in the shifting circumstances of being black and British. If the problem of reggae is its place on the pop margins, the problem of soul and funk is their place in the white mainstream.

And the current idol of south London is Smiley Culture, a young toaster who works with dub forms and a rap sensibility. His hit singles "Cockney Translation" and "Police Officer" are reggae records that take for granted street experience—black and white youth moving in and out of cultural alliance. Smiley Culture is black, West Indian, British, a Londoner. His skill is to move in and out of his different voices at great speed, to hold in balance two mythical figures, Bob Marley and Eddie Murphy.

Black American music has been a white fantasy for so long the implications of its appropriation by black Britons aren't yet realized. But there are implications—for a white-run music industry, for the sound of suburban pleasure. I mean, how much longer can Tony Blackburn and Phil Collins and Wham be what's meant by British soul?

Simon Frith is the author of Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll.

FILMCLIPS

Hungry for Profits

Robert Richter (*Pesticides and Pills*) is a master of the coolly argued, authoritative documentary film essay, and in *Hungry for Profits* he's also on top of the news. The feature-length (86 minutes) film budgets its time carefully across 10 developing nations to chart a familiar pattern in each: agribusiness, corporations—soybeans, peanuts, pineapples, sugar—teamed up with governments hungry for foreign exchange earnings to set up corporate agriculture. The results: small farmers lose land, shantytowns in cities burgeon and food production increases while people go hungry. Profits and products stream to the first world; political trouble starts at home—the news footage of food riots is as ghastly as the testimony of small farmers is poignant—as international debt

burdens increase. When the International Monetary Fund moves in to extend loans, austerity measures include increasing export agriculture, which only increases the cycle of hunger. The problem is complex and integrated, as the section on the Sahel shows. The problem there started, we learn, with French colonial peasant agriculture, which degraded land and increased desertification. Peanuts, not drought, are the root of the current crisis—something you saw for the first time on public TV, when this feature was aired, not in the acres of daily print coverage on this suddenly-fashionable story. The film has its heart-tugging moments, such as when a Brazilian landless peasant says of his children's future: "I wait for the moment when they die of hunger." But in general the feature balances expert tes-

timony with vivid on-site footage from Costa Rica (where rainforests are leveled for corporate cattle ranching to feed Roy Rogers and Burger King), the Philippines, the Dominican Republic and other countries. The editorial voice is strong in favor of national control over agriculture to feed local people, but the documentary backs up its position with powerful and carefully documented arguments. For more information contact Richter Productions, 330 W. 42nd St., New York, NY 10036, (212) 947-1395.

Women of Steel

After watching this half-hour documentary made by women in the steel industry, you won't easily forget the women it profiles and what a regular paycheck with benefits meant to them. Dental work for the kids and a safe place to live; tasks that, if hard, brought dignity and challenge. And you won't forget what it meant to lose

those jobs in steel: dining on the "free" pizza from a \$2.01-an-hour job at a fast-food parlor; meetings with the mortgage banker; waiting in line for free food. These women have to work to support families, and they never asked for a break. They held their jobs not only because the union was there, but because they pushed the union to get and keep them there. And they now search for ways to regain what shutdowns took away. The film makes use of its strong characters. It traces their past in family photos, explores their present in interviews and visits their families. A warmly personal, yet sociologically rich portrait, *Women of Steel* also comes with a discussion paper detailing the role of women in the economy and steel industry, and the effects of weakening affirmative action legislation. For more information contact Mon Valley Media, 5048 Orinoco St., Pittsburgh, PA 15207, (412) 521-0951.

—Pat Aufderheide

Nicaragua

Continued from page 7

focusing on the destruction of oil storage tanks in October of 1983, CIA mining of the Nicaraguan harbors and the helicopter incident in which two Americans died in January 1984.

"All of this," Carrión said, "is evidence of U.S. violation of Nicaraguan sovereignty, reflecting the now-overt support for the *contras*." Last year Nicaragua brought the case before the World Court, which is part of the United Nations, although the Reagan administration does not recognize the court's jurisdiction in its conflict with Nicaragua.

During testimony, Carrión also referred to the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force) offensive, which began shortly after the U.S. Congress approved \$27 million in new funds for the *contras*. "This offensive reveals their dependence on the U.S. administration, as they would not have launched these attacks without this support," he said.

Back in Nicaragua, the war continues unabated, particularly in long-affected

northern regions and the south-central region of Chontales. The offensive began in July when a force of more than 1,200 descended from Honduran border camps and targeted the important Estelí area 120 miles north of Managua. Government forces repelled the attacked, saying the actions had more propaganda value than military. The attacks caused much damage, however, and forced Sandinista forces to use the sophisticated MI-24 Soviet helicopters for the first time.

Air power and use of heavy artillery have also been reported in Chontales, an area where civilian collaboration with the *contra*

was more apparent (the isolated cattle-producing region is known for its conservatism and independence). "They are coming in stronger than ever," said one soldier home on leave from the north. "You could say this is their big offensive."

Officials say that the situation remains manageable, although the toll on the population remains heavy. *Contra* groups now operate in smaller units and continue to ambush vehicles and strike at economic targets such as cooperatives, where members now routinely work heavily armed. Twenty-four-hour vigilance and a constant state of alert are now part of daily life throughout the country's rural regions.

On one coffee cooperative north of Estelí, where several hundred *campesinos* have had to relocate because of danger in outlying areas, every man was carrying a rifle and ammunition belt on a recent visit. The cooperative has been threatened several times this year, and four agricultural advisers died in an ambush nearby in mid-August.

"This is how we have to live in this zone," said cooperative member Fidel Gonzalez. "Everything seems quiet but all of a sudden it can change."

Obfuscation

Continued from page 16

Caspar Weinberger tried to skirt embarrassment by insisting that the Marines had not been withdrawn, but merely "re-deployed several miles to the west," i.e., onto boats leaving the Mediterranean.

Obfuscatory skills

Another, more subtle way of avoiding the obvious is through creative filibustering. Smother the inquiry with soothing words.

For example, several months ago I responded to a constituent who favored cutting military retirement benefits, an unthinkable concept for my boss, who represents a district with almost 100,000 veterans. My reply read, "I appreciate your balanced views on the military retirement system, which addresses a difficult and controversial issue. I have only the greatest respect and appreciation for the people who have served in our nation's armed forces. At the same time, the budget deficit is so large that we must give serious consideration to all reasonable deficit-reduction proposals, including those mentioned in your letter. Thank you again for contacting me."

If skilled, the obfuscatory writer can not only cloak their ignorance, they can impress the reader with their depth and perspicacity. This creature, for example, recently stumbled out of a report on military production: "Faced with the choice of main-

IN THESE TIMES, SEPT. 25-OCT. 1, 1985 15 taining a program with a history of limited or no success and the cancelation of the program with corresponding negative consequences, any consideration of the program's future should entail a full examination of plausible alternatives for mitigating the necessity of choosing between two such undesirable extremes." On the balance, this says nothing. But it says it so *impressively*.

People think those of us in Congress cannot speak English. They say we consider ourselves immune from the laws of good grammar and think that syntax is just a tariff on liquor. I believe, however, that Orwell was right. When English is abused in politics, it is usually intentional. My job is to constrict the debate, to shelter misdeeds and to rewrite the truth.

I am losing my ability to speak English, but I may soon be fluent in politics. ■

Leonard Solomon is the pseudonym of a congressional aide.

CALENDAR

Use the calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$20.00 for one insertion, \$30.00 for two insertions** and **\$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

WASHINGTON, D C

September 27

"The Road from Nairobi"—Arab-Jewish Dialog: Two Women's Perspectives. Reena Bernards, executive director, New Jewish Agenda and Yervat Hatem, assistant professor, Howard University, and Egyptian feminist, report from the recent Nairobi women's gathering. Sponsored by DC/Md DSA. 8:00 p.m., Machinists Hall, 1300 Con-

necticut Ave., NW. \$3 donation/\$1 low-income. Information: (202) 296-7693.

October 17

Debs-Thomas Dinner, sponsored by DC/Md DSA, honors Victor Reuther, Oct. 17 at 7:30 p.m., National Press Club, Washington, D.C. Tickets: \$45. Reservations accepted until Oct. 4. Contact DC/Md DSA, 1346 Connecticut Ave., NW, #810A, 20036, (202) 296-7693.

INDIANA, P A

October 23-25

U.S. Working Class History and Contemporary Labor Movement Symposium. Keynoters: Melvyn Dubofsky and David Gordon. Speakers include Sean Wilentz, Celia Eckhardt, Leon Fink, Mari Jo Buhle, Philip Nyden, Nelson Lichtenstein, Alice Kessler-Harris, Everett Kassalow, Peter Kelly and Charles Bryan. Contact: Irwin Marcus, History Department, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705, (412) 357-2227.

CLASSIFIED

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IN THESE TIMES is seeking an ASSISTANT PUBLISHER to organize fundraising and promotional activities at the paper. Must have previous fundraising and public relations experience. Ability to write grants and solicit funds from individuals and organizations. Experience with board of directors and volunteers desirable. Salary range \$18,000-22,000. Send resume to: Alfred Dale, ITT, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657.

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COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS: The Dakota Resource Council is a grassroots organization of farmers and rural people active on energy development, family farm and toxics issues. Members are commit-

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CENTRAL AMERICA RESOURCE CENTER seeking director. National information clearing house provides computer-assisted refugee legal support and public education services. Director will develop and supervise all projects. Responsible for raising substantial budget. Proven administrative and fundraising ability essential. Writing skills, background in Central America issues, Spanish desirable. Salary \$20-25,000 with benefits. Send resumes, cover letter with relevant skills, three references by Nov. 1 to: Search Committee, CARC, Box 2327, Austin, TX 78704.

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"Dear Constituents"

BY
Leonard
Solomon

In Congress
bad English
has political
value.

POLITICAL LANGUAGE," GEORGE Orwell pointed out 40 years ago, "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."

Orwell might have written my job description. After writing letters, memos and speeches for a congressman for six months, the better part of my lexicon has been ground into the tiles by a bulky gang of government euphemisms, neologisms and clichés.

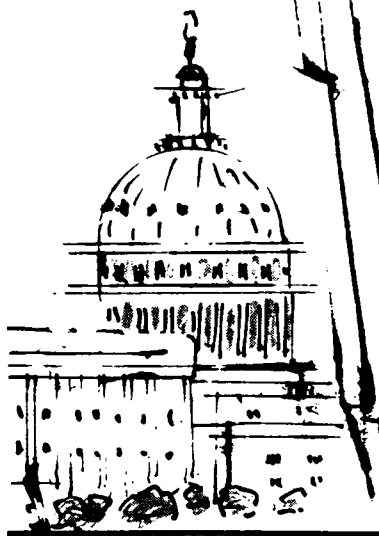
I was hired to clothe the Emperor, not with garments but with words. Where no garments exist, it is my job to create them—from old speeches, voting records and bills co-sponsored. Or sometimes from nothing at all.

For example, our office was recently pelted by constituents with pre-printed postcards that read: "Dear Congressman: We must stop the Cubans and Russians from creating a military base on the mainland of Central America. I wholeheartedly support the president's efforts to fund the anti-Communist Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters. I expect you to vote with our president in support of this vital part of his realistic, anti-Communist foreign policy."

Given my boss' liberal foreign policy, how could we respond? Mind you, it is considered impolitic to disagree openly with a constituent. We had nothing to say to these folks that would make them happy, or even keep them quiet. My response to our far-right brethren read: "Thank you for your post card. I, too, do not want Nicaragua to become a military base for Cubans and Russians. This is why I support the Contadora process and a negotiated settlement to the violence in Central America."

A widespread ignorance

Many Democrats in Washington would be in big trouble for their positions on Central America were it not for that soft cushion called "the Contadora process." Although few seem to know anything about it, it is something they can "stand for" and "strongly endorse" without drawing fire from the left or the right. Never mind that they may have no understanding of Contadora or anything else in Latin America: the "Contadora process" has been a handy



Peter Hannan

loincloth for many a bare foreign policy paper. (Both Democrats and Republicans are similarly bewildered by the Middle East. Were it not for that happy flower called "the Camp David process"—never mind that it withered five years ago—the biennial campaign questions about Israel would draw a long, musty silence from most members of Congress.)

Another felicitous trap-door is the well-placed qualifier. Not long ago I responded to a constituent's inquiry by drafting a letter that exoriated President Reagan for backing cuts in Social Security. Since my boss may soon support the same cuts himself, I ended with the line, "it is my intention to reduce the deficit without touching Social Security." To the uninitiated, this is a reassuring statement.

However, in Washington, anyone who says they "intend" to do one thing usually means they will soon do the opposite. They are saying, in effect, that while their intentions are pristine, they may soon be deflected by some brutish circumstances beyond their jurisdiction. Thus in Washington, when a senator declares, "I have no plans to run for higher office," it is understood that he will shortly be distributing campaign buttons.

Are these lies? Not really. Perhaps they are "misstatements," "untruths" or "grievous errors." But the politician's lexicon is too pliable to permit simple deceptions to turn into lies.

The linguistic behemoths that crowd political language almost always have a purpose. For instance, when a political figure does something unpopular, the easiest way to guard what passes for dignity is to give their actions a new name. When Congress wanted to raise taxes in 1982 without seeming to do so, the members shunned the odious term "taxes" and instead spoke of "revenue enhancement" and "receipts strengthening." By the same ingenious process, political actors have transformed budget cuts into "budgetary savings," recessions into "rolling readjustments," lobbying into "legislative advocacy leadership" and nuclear radiation into "energy releases."

When the Reagan administration pulled U.S. troops out of Lebanon—hours after saying they wouldn't—Defense Secretary

Continued on page 15